



The Echo

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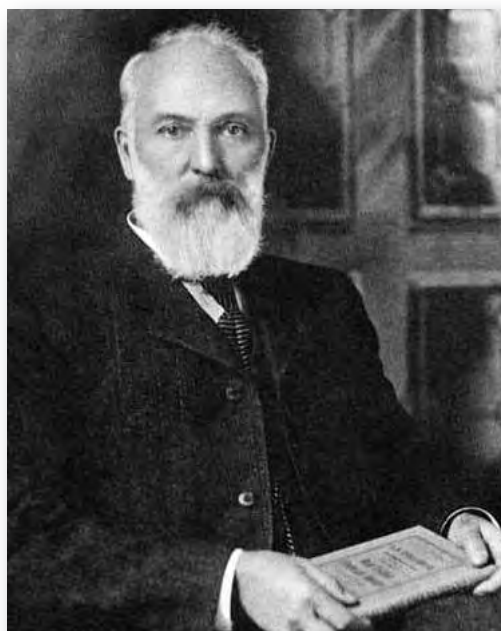
Local Explorers of the Mountains New Exhibit Opens Saturday, Nov. 4th

Five fascinating men who dedicated their lives to charting, conserving and promoting the San Gabriel Mountains they loved will be featured in the Historical Society's new exhibit, "Inspired by the San Gabriels: Five Men and the Mountains."

Featuring their words, maps, photos and memorabilia from the 1890s through the 1950s, the exhibit profiles the unique characters and accomplishments of Theodore Lukens, Will Thrall, Don McLain, L.T. Gotchy and George Wharton James.

An opening event, free to all, will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday Nov. 4 at the Historical Society's Museum and Archives in the Altadena Community Center.

George Wharton James, writer, lecturer, and publicist for the Mount Lowe Railway in the late 1890s, believed that a man who loves and lives in the wilderness will "give you unique views of life and will proclaim a purer, better gospel than



**Theodore Lukens, known as
"father of forestry"**

the city-bred average citizen dreams of."

Theodore Lukens, known as the "father of forestry," established a tree nursery on Henninger Flats in the early 1900s after devastating fires ravaged the hillsides. He traveled up and down the West Coast researching tree species and collecting seeds, and oversaw a reforestation effort in the San Gabriels.

Through his writings in *Trails Magazine* and the *LA Times*, **Will Thrall** informed the public about the mountains: hiking trails, information about preventing forest fires, and some history of the San Gabriels. He helped

thousands of Angelenos discover the mountains.

Photographs and hand-drawn, beautifully-detailed topographic maps of the mountains highlight Altadenan **Don McLain's** years as a surveyor for the forest service. He also named many of the local peaks, including Mount Lukens.

Last but certainly not least, the exhibit profiles **L.T. Gotchy**, a self-proclaimed "documentary photographer extraordinaire" who used his camera to capture the burned remnants of the Mount Lowe Railway, life as a Forest Service firefighter, and the tiny cabin he inhabited in the mountains.

The exhibit will be on yearlong display during AHS hours 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays and by appointment.

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President's Letter *by Kathy Hoskins*

First I would like to thank out-going president Jane Brackman for her leadership of Altadena Historical Society for the last eight years. She has helped AHS grow in many ways during her term in office. I am honored to follow in her footsteps as president and am grateful for the opportunity to continue the leadership of this organization.

I have lived in Altadena since 1950. My family moved here from the Lake and Washington area of Pasadena. My mother was a native of Pasadena and my father lived in Altadena as a teenager. In other words, I

have deep roots in this area.

When I retired from teaching at Willard Elementary School, I knew that I wanted to volunteer at Altadena Historical Society. For the last 10 years I have been involved in many areas of AHS including serving on the Board of Directors. My main activity has been researching and answering research requests. I really enjoy finding out new things about this community even though it has been my home for most of my life. I still run across streets that I have never heard of and questions that lead me to new information about the interesting people and places around me.

Plans for this coming year include continuing our regular quarterly lecture series, installing a new museum exhibit that features five men inspired by our San Gabriel mountains, expanding our partnerships with local schools to present Altadena's history to students in the area, and recording more oral histories with those who have contributed to the social history of our community.

We also plan to continue our efforts to partner with community groups and organizations. Recently AHS contributed \$500 to the new triangle park that is being



developed across from the Sheriff's station. This project, led by Los Angeles County, Altadena Heritage and Amigos de los Rios, will be a wonderful use of open space with the opportunity to sit and take in mountain views. Our contribution seemed logical as the original name for AHS was Altadena Historical and Beautification Society.

I hope that you will check this newsletter and our web site for information on our coming events.

New Board Members

We are very pleased to announce three new members of our Board of Directors: **William R. Boyd, Jr.**, a real estate executive with much experience helping nonprofit organizations; **Sandra Thomas**, Altadena Councilperson and well-known community activist; and **Daria Topousis**, JPL software project manager, writer, and Huntington Library Reader. All Altadenans, their range of skills will help us bring Altadena's rich history to Altadenans, historians, students, and the interested public. Welcome to all!

Board of Directors

Kathy Hoskins – President
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Bobbi Feasel
Mary Gandsey
Laurie Kinsinger
Larry Mudica
Jean Phillips
Pam Wright
Dina Zanolosso

What's Up at AHS?

We are very pleased to announce that our Mount Lowe Website, too many years in the making, will finally be available on our website, www.altadenahistoricalsociety.org on Nov. 4. It will also be available on a laptop computer where it can be viewed by visitors to the Archives. Check it out and tell us what you think!

We are pleased to welcome two new volunteers: **Larry Mudica**, a talented PCC intern who will be staying on with us, and **Bobbi Feasel**, a photographer and photo restorer who will help us with our photo collection.

At our spring sale in the Full Circle

Thrift shop courtyard, shoppers purchased items not suited to our collection, and visited the thrift shop to see the inside of the historic Pacific Electric Substation, the last remaining building from the Mount Lowe Railway and Resort. Volunteer **Pam Wright** gave a well-received talk about the Cobb Estate at the Crescenta Valley Historical Society, and we're working with MonteCedro's designers to provide photographs for their historical wall.

We have some very special new additions to the Archives, thanks to some generous donors:

John Reveley gave us one of the old Echo Phones used on Echo Mountain, which now has pride of place in our museum.

A fascinating scrapbook about Gustav

Albrecht, a Cal Tech chemist; friend of Linus Pauling, Richard Davies, and Jirayr Zorthian; and music critic whose "Music Matters" columns appeared in the Pasadena Independent, came to us from his niece, **Nancy Lugosi**.

A carefully curated set of Mount Lowe

postcards, complete with postmarks and messages, was donated by **Rosana**

Whittlesley, daughter of collector Frederick Langford.

Three postcards depicting the Switzer-land chapel and the view from the chapel came from

Marie Spencer.

Bruce Chubbuck donated a Boy Scout commemorative pin he wore when directing traffic at the 1946 Christmas Tree Lane lighting ceremony.

Louise Sutton gave us additional books and pamphlets she and her husband, Jerry Sutton, collected over the years.

Greg Gill donated a wonderful colorized photo of

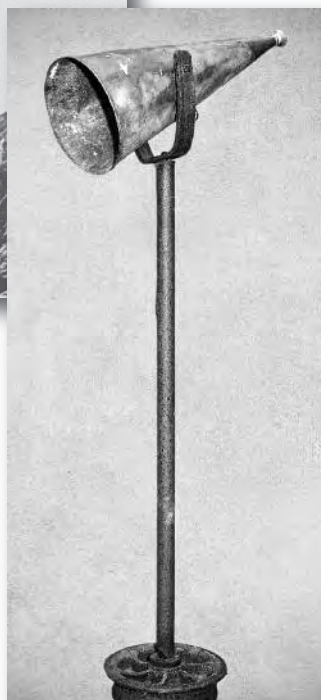
Jr.'s restaurant, which is now seeking a very large wall to live on.

"Photographs and Souvenirs," by Patrick Leahy, a novel set in Altadena, that draws heavily on the author's experiences, was given to us by his son, **Dan Leahy**.

Nancy and George Warner gave us several photographs of her father, Don McLain, as well as a scrapbook about Don's life and adventures. Don is one of the men featured in our new exhibit, opening Nov. 4. Don't miss it.



The Echophone in use (above) and at Archives (right)



America's New Pastime: The Great Hiking Era



The written works of inspirational naturalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau gave rise to the "Great Hiking Era," a period that spanned more than five decades, beginning in the nineteenth century.

The recreational walking movement caught fire in Southern California in the 1880s when LA experienced unprecedented growth. Seeking respite from unhealthy and stressful cities they'd only recently created, people headed for nature's fresh air, clean water, and wide-open spaces.

Mountain trekking offered "...a blissful escape from the obligations of civilized society," wrote popular essayist Charles Dudley Warner in an 1878 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

The virtues of wilderness exploration, advocated by environmental philosopher John Muir, inspired city folks with enough time and money to venture into the

Within a few years, six major trails culminated at Redbox Saddle, just 12 miles above Altadena.

Destination sites, like Mt. Wilson, home to two of the

world's largest telescopes, and Professor Lowe's railroad resorts, featured overnight accommodations and seasonal opportunities to play in the snow.

A number of retreats were established to host outdoors enthusiasts who day-hiked from one camp to another.

These privately owned cabin resorts offered rustic but relatively luxurious amenities, some with fully erected furnished tents, cabins and meal plans.

Switzer Camp, a popular destination

for well-heeled Pasadenans, was established in the upper reaches of the Arroyo Seco in 1884. Destroyed by fire in 1896, the camp reopened and for a while went by the name of Camp Losa-Dena, a combination of Los Angeles and Altadena.

Most established campground resorts are long gone, but a few still operate including Sturtevant Camp in the upper part of Big Santa



Woman feeding deer near Mount Lowe. c. 1902

backcountry. "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees."

With its sheer cliffs of unstable decomposed granite, the forbidding San Gabriel mountain range offered few comforts for casual travelers.

But industrious entrepreneurs were quick to add expanded systems of foot trails, signage and maps.



Strains Camp - Mt. Wilson. 1907

Anita Canyon.

People flocked to the mountains. A 1902 essay in *Sunset* magazine advised women to pack, among other necessities, two short skirts (short meant wool skirts hemmed barely above the ankles), a matching set of bloomers and leggings, along with comfortable shoes for campsite lounging and a sturdy pair with thick soles reinforced with nails for “tramping”.

By the late 1930s, up to two million adventurers hiked annually in the San Gabriels, many putting in more than ten miles a day.

Betty Dawson who grew up in Altadena (1918-1929) in a craftsman bungalow on Boston Street said that on Saturdays her



family caught the incline, then took the line to Alpine Tavern. “We never stayed there. We hiked back to Echo Mountain then over to Mount Wilson, down the trail and we were picked up in Sierra Madre. My father and mother were great hikers.”

She thoughtfully added, “I was not as fond of it as they were.”

Betty remembered the summer of 1924 when she was 18 years old. A fire raged across the foothills. Her father and brother along with other able-bodied men were recruited off the streets to fight the fire.

In 1929, the state began constructing the Angeles Crest Highway, one of the highest roads in California, eventually



Elise on Mount Wilson Trail. c. 1904

reaching an altitude of 7,000 feet when it was completed in the 1950s.

The great hiking era in the San Gabriel Mountains met its natural end as increasing numbers of paved roads provided easy auto access, making way for a new kind of outdoor experience—car camping. But the lure of the mountains continues—millions of hikers continue to visit the San Gabriels each year.

— *By Jane Brackman*

Altadena's Four Corners — Lake Avenue and Altadena Drive Through the Decades

There've been some changes around the intersection of Lake Avenue and Altadena Drive lately.

Revamping a small, public park is turning a bland, little-used triangle into an inviting attraction of rock walls, walkways and seating areas with views of the towering San Gabriel Mountains.

A handsome, '50s-modern photo-and-film studio building has become a bicycle sales and repair shop and a museum housing 34,000 rabbit statues and likenesses.

But, then, the four corners have been metamorphosing for a century.

For decades what is now known as Altadena Drive was named Foothill



Above photo shows the sharp southward bend of Altadena Drive at Lake Avenue. Left photo shows the proposed straightening of Altadena Drive in 1969.



substantial houses just west of Lake in what is now the road's current path; apparently for the sake of economy and convenience, the road was originally routed around them.

The road still has some gentle curves on either side of Lake, but nothing like the dip it made before being straightened out in 1969. Triangle Park was created out of the former roadbed in

Boulevard. Foothill--in Altadena--became Altadena Drive in 1955.

As it approached the intersection with Lake Avenue, the road took a serious swoop to the south, across what is now parkland. An early aerial photograph shows that there were

1971, according to The Altadenan newspaper.

SOUTHEAST CORNER

An early type of strip-mall angles across the southeast corner of the intersection. Although

the buildings were built separately, they have an appealing façade. The more-ornate buildings are at the eastern end; the plainer boxes, built later, are at the western end.

An early station of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department anchored the eastern end of the strip. Next door was the Fire Department; its scalloped doorway, now a picture window, accommodated the fire vehicles.

A framed history hanging in the current Fire Station on El Molino Avenue and Mariposa Street refers to that Foothill firehouse in 1923; the red brick Sheriff's building next door looks even older.

Sadly, a Spanish-style three-or-four-story tower at the back of the fire station has been demolished. The tall tower was used to hang and dry the soggy canvas hoses after a fire, but it also may have been used as a wildfire-lookout tower during the dry seasons.

The tower was most likely demolished and the building converted to commercial use after a modern, new fire station was built at Mariposa and El Molino in 1954.

Just east of the sheriff's station, across a narrow alley, is the First Church of Christian Science. With its white, wood siding and picturesque steeple, the church brings a slice of New England to the Southern California foothills.

Church member Joan Jordan says, "In 1941 a

group of Christian Scientists began meeting in the American Legion Hall [a building on Fontanet Way, just south of where El Patron Mexican restaurant is now].

"Apparently, the dais was shared with a mouse who would appear intermittently during the services, and the Sunday school area terrorized children with its hunting trophies of the heads of lions and tigers mounted on the walls."

In 1945 the congregation began working to find a site to build a church, and their first service in their beautiful new edifice was held Feb. 2, 1950.

Just south of the corner, where Lifeline Fellowship Christian Church is now located, was the popular Venetian restaurant. Behind that building was a miniature golf course, with some of its pathways and hazards—such as a miniature California mission church—still visible from the alley.



Remnants of the old miniature golf course on N. Lake Avenue.



Cars parked along Foothill Rd.(now Altadena Dr.) near Lake Avenue in 1920.

NORTHEAST CORNER

A 1920s tally of businesses by the Altadena Chamber of Commerce bragged of 36 gas stations. However, an Altadena historian says many of those "stations" were merely small



Early gas station on the southwest corner of Lake and Foothill/Altadena Drive.

Interestingly, the 1953 addition of a large, east wing to the church was designed by Altadena architect Boyd Georgi, showing none of the mid-century modernism he employed when designing Altadena's new library at Mariposa Street and Santa Rosa Avenue in 1967.

The church's stained-glass windows were produced by the renowned Judson Studios, the venerable Highland Park firm. And a ceramic-tile mosaic artwork outside the church's fellowship hall is by renowned mid-century artist and architect Millard Sheets, known for the large and colorful artworks that decorated numerous Home Savings and Loan buildings through the Southland.

stores that also sold bottled gasoline and didn't have drive-up pumps.

One of those gas stations was at the northeast corner of Lake and Foothill/Altadena Drive. Eventually the tiny gas station was deemed outdated and inefficient, and a big, new station with repair bays was built behind and almost on top of it.

Once the new station was finished, the little old station was demolished.

Immediately to the east is the Altadena Community Church, started in 1940 when a group left Westminster Presbyterian, down Lake across the Pasadena border, in loyalty to Westminster's recently

dismissed pastor. They affiliated with the Congregational denomination, met in various locations including homes and even a tavern, and had to wait until after World War II until their new, Spanish-revival-style sanctuary was built.



NORTHWEST CORNER

Commercial photographer Larry Harmon opened his modern, new studio building at 2605 N. Lake Ave. in 1959. That building, now the Bunny Museum and Steve Lubanski's bike sales and repair shop, was immediately north of the

Amos Dance Studio taught many Altadenans (left)

The Larry Harmon photography studio (below)



fondly remembered Amos Dance Studio.

The dance studio was founded by Lillian Amos, who moved to Altadena with her husband, Robert Groesbeck, and their three children in 1942. She taught little girls ballet and tap in the Masonic lodge (just east of today's Everest restaurant at Lake and Mendocino) before opening her studio at 2583 N. Lake Ave., telephone SY4-7066. She was later joined by her daughter, Louise Peasey.

Harmon eventually sold the property, which was proposed in 1969 as the site of a McDonald's restaurant. The nearby Poppyfields neighborhood association and many residents opposed the project.

"Tempers sizzled Tuesday when neighborhood residents met a McDonald's representative to discuss the controversial fast-food restaurant at the corner of Lake Avenue and Altadena Drive," the Star-News reported on March 14, 1970, adding that the McDonald's representative "kept calm" during the meeting.

A previous meeting had drawn 200 "irate" protestors, the Star-News reported. "You Deserve A Brick Today," a protest sign read; "Get your buns out of town," another demanded.

The proposal was eventually withdrawn and the restaurant was built at the corner of Woodbury Road and Lincoln Avenue within the Pasadena city limits.

West of the intersection, land was bulldozed and a large shopping center was built in 1965-'66, anchored by an Albertson's supermarket. But in 1981 the Altadena/Pasadena Chronicle reported that the Albertson's had been boarded up since 1977; eventually it became a Thrifty's, and now a Rite-Aid.

SOUTHWEST CORNER

A Spanish-style gas station anchored the southwest corner in the decades before World War II, but after the war it was moved south on Lake (where it is now the Café de Leche coffee shop) to make room for a modern restaurant. A smaller branch of The Headliner restaurant at Altadena Drive and Washington, it was called Juniors, or JR's.

JR's was a popular diner and after-school hangout, fondly remembered by longtime residents. After it closed it was variously the Echo Café, Three Corners, and Fire and Ice restaurants before becoming today's popular



JR. Coffee Shop, in days gone by, is now the popular El Patron Mexican Restaurant.

El Patron Mexican restaurant.

The Altadena history book by Michele Zack says the new sheriff's station opened in 1949—it's since been remodeled—and the Altadena Community Center, a county-owned and operated facility, opened next door in 2003.

— by Rob Hallwachs

Book Notes

Altadena Historical Society has a reference (non-lending) library available for your browsing, research and entertainment. You're welcome to visit, read, ask questions and seek help from our expert staff. Stop in and take a look. This month, we're featuring three books we like, all related to our new exhibit, "Five Men Inspired by the San Gabriels".

"The San Gabriels Southern California Mountain Country" by John W. Robinson

How many times have we looked up at "our" mountains and sighed at their beauty, imagined ourselves hiking "up there" or enjoyed a winter snowfall, etc., without giving much thought to their history and how it intertwines with our own?

This fascinating book contains many perspectives (and photographs) of the San Gabriels and the lives/interests of those who have lived there. Hunters, fishers, outlaws/rustlers, miners, entrepreneurs, naturalists,

explorers, scientists, astronomers and local folks seeking recreation—all found opportunity in these beautiful mountains.

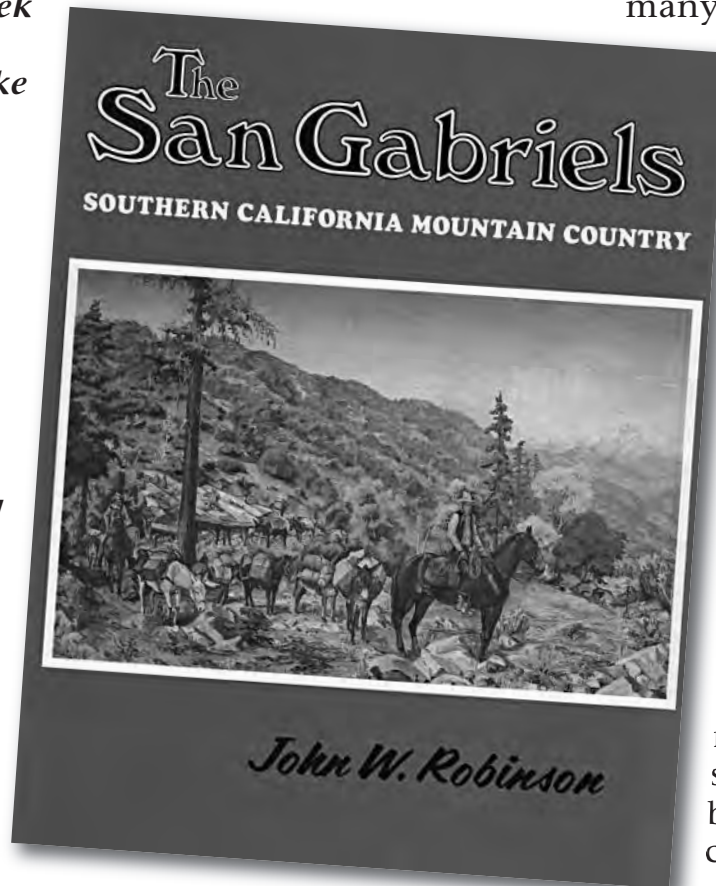
Imagine the early wildlife: grizzlies, black bears, mountain lions,

and preserve what's left of that once pristine wilderness.

Famous names (Tiburcio Vasquez, Henry Huntington, Thaddeus Lowe, "Benito" Wilson, Dr. George E. Hale and many others) make

appearances in this book, along with everyday lovers of nature.

Regardless of your knowledge of the San Gabriels and their history, I almost guarantee you'll learn something new in the pages of this book!



bobcats, porcupines, condors in the skies and so many more species now gone.

From Native Americans (who cut lumber, hunted and fished) to taverns, tourist camps, legendary railroads to highly sophisticated observatories, we Southern Californians have left our mark. Others are now trying to erase those marks

Two highly accomplished men highlighted in our new exhibit are the subjects of two more books in our collection:

- "Theodore Lukens, Father of Forestry" by Shirley Sargent, and

- "Will Thrall and the San Gabriels, A Man to Match the Mountains" by Ronald C Woolsey. Woolsey will be our featured speaker at our October program.

Two fascinating men, two fascinating books. We highly recommend both.

— By Pam Wright

FREE

Will Thrall: Hiker, Writer, Explorer, Conservationist

AHS October Program Highlights a Remarkable Mountain Man

Sometimes called "Southern California's John Muir," Will Thrall dedicated his life to the preservation of the San Gabriel Mountains.

Thrall's acclaimed biographer, **Ronald C. Woolsey**, will present a program on his life story at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 23 at the Community Center, 730 E. Altadena Drive, sponsored by the Altadena Historical Society.

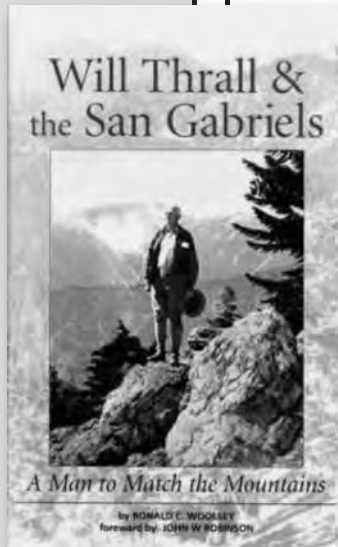
Woolsey will accompany his talk with an exhibit of Thrall memorabilia, and copies of his book will be available for purchase.

From his arrival in the 1880s to his death in the 1960s, Thrall reveled in and defended the beauty of the San Gabriel Mountains, documenting the Great Hiking Age, working on the Mount Lowe Railway, organizing hiking clubs and promoting conservation of natural resources.

"He embraced the spirit which connected people with the San Gabriels, and his life is a study in Southern California itself," said Woolsey, a history professor at Citrus College and El Camino College and author of the book "Will Thrall and the San Gabriels; A Man to Match the Mountains."

Thrall is one of five men featured in the Historical Society's new exhibit, opening Saturday, November 4, "Five Men Inspired by the San Gabriels."

The program will be free and open to the public.



Don't Miss these Events

We have a fantastic line-up of events for history lovers in the coming months.

● Quarterly Program: **Will Thrall, A Man to Match The Mountains**

Monday, Oct. 23: Altadena Community Center, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Free and open to all.

Please see the program description on this page.

● **Mt. Lowe Brewing Co. Fundraiser**

Thursday, Oct. 26, 5:00 - 10:00 p.m. Support AHS during an evening of fun and great craft beer at a brewery named in honor of our local mountain railway resort. See the enclosed flyer for more details.

● **Altadena Historical Society**

Exhibit Opening

Saturday, Nov. 4: Altadena Community Center, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Free and open to all.

● **AHS Mount Lowe Website Launch**

Saturday, Nov. 4: Altadena Community Center, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

See it at the Archives or access it anytime through the AHS Website.

● **Interesting Altadenans Exhibit Travels to Altadena Library**

Displayed at the library for the month of November. If you missed your chance to see this exhibit, Altadena Library offers you another month of viewing. Free and open to all.

● Quarterly Program, **JPL History**

Jan. 22: Altadena Community Center, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

JPL Historian, Erik Conway, gives us an insider's look at this famous institution. Free and open to all.



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VISIT OUR BLOG!
altadenahistoricalsociety.blogspot.com

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 or renew today!

Name _____

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_____ \$25 Membership

_____ \$50 Premium Membership (includes original 1920's
developer's brochure for Altadena Woodlands)

You can now join online <http://www.altadenahistoricalsociety.org/membership.htm>