



The Echo

Volume 91

Number 1

Where the Past is Present

Spring/Summer 2019

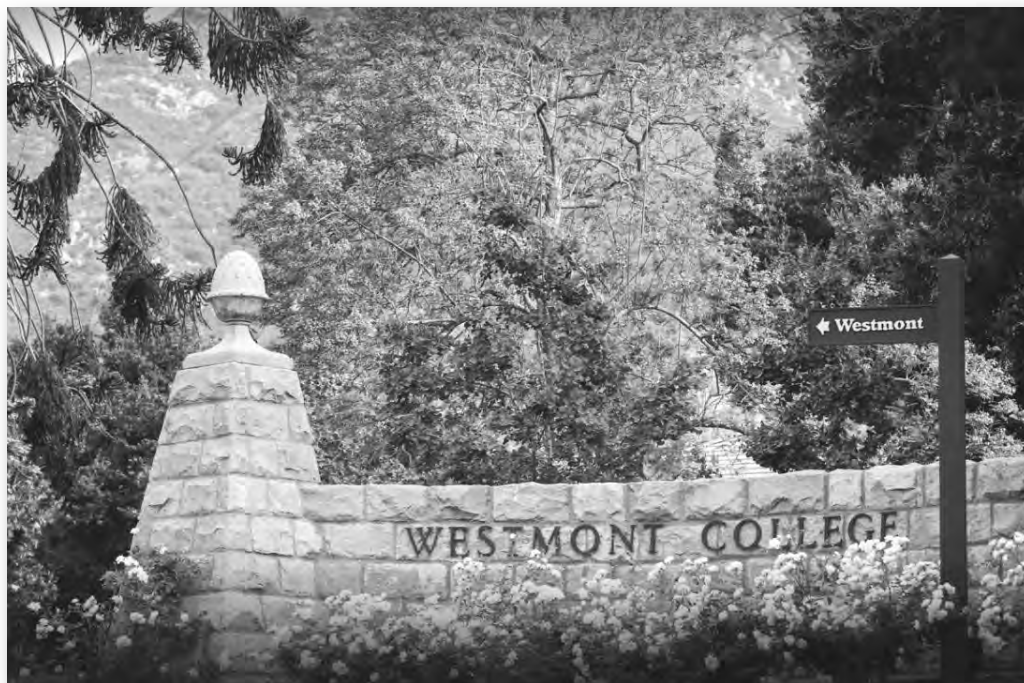
Altadena Might-Have-Beens

Communities share a sense of place, defined by clear-cut decisions that take us in one direction or another. But neighborhoods are also shaped by the might-have-beens, projects that never came to fruition, either through unexpected circumstances or organized resident opposition. The few mentioned here are sourced from Altadena newspapers archived at AHS.

Altadena Country Club, and the adjacent Los Angeles County golf course would now be the campus of Westmont College, a Christian liberal arts school.

The original club, founded in 1910, built on acreage bordered by Mendocino, Holliston, Hill and Morada, prospered

Manufacturing), purchased the property on behalf of Bible Missionary Institute, for \$175,000, a plan dependent on rezoning. The public hearing at Eliot school drew 900



Altadena Country Club could now be Westmont College

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on and off until the 1929 stock market crash.

During the depression public fees from restaurant, clubhouse, pool and golf course rentals, failed to sustain it and the bank foreclosed. In 1944 Ruth Kerr (Kerr Glass

residents. More than 700 voted against zoning changes.

Her petition refused, Kerr disposed of all the furniture, and sold the east section to developers. The county purchased the remaining land for a public golf course and a coalition of members purchased the clubhouse, pool and tennis courts.

Today the highly regarded Westmont College sprawls across 125 acres near Santa Barbara.

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President's Letter *by Kathy Hoskins*

Another busy year has ended at the Altadena Historical Society. It is time to look back on how well we have met our 2018 goals and look forward to 2019.

What We've Done

Our 2018 End of the Year drive raised \$5,000 which is being used to augment our efforts to preserve the AHS collection for years to come. We added 50 new members to our organization and significantly increased the number of premium memberships. Many thanks to our members and donors for supporting the

Historical Society's mission. Without you we couldn't exist.

2018 was an active year at the Archives where we welcomed two new volunteers to help with research requests and collection cataloging.

We greeted twice as many visitors this year as we did in 2017.

We continued to index our files and collections making them easier for visitors and researchers to access. And we mounted our annual museum exhibition which focused on Altadena's own community theater group, Theatre Americana.

Our AHS Facebook and Instagram accounts have been growing by leaps and bounds. We have issued two newsletters and one e-newsletter this year to go along with our quarterly lecture programs.

We also launched our First Saturday Open Houses to accommodate people who work and are unable to visit during our normal business hours. You can learn more about our monthly open houses on page 7.



Looking Forward

2019 will be equally busy, I'm sure. We've added a new membership level – "Supporting Member," which comes with additional benefit incentives.

We're adding a series of parlor talks in historic places just for premium and supporting members. Admission for two is free, but reservations will be required.

We will continue to offer free research for members. There will be a fee attached to any research conducted by our researchers for the general public.

Exhibits will continue to be a major focus for us, with rotating exhibits in the Community Center lobby display cases and a major annual museum exhibit in the Archives. We'll be planning the annual exhibit this year, but it will open in January of 2020 to avoid the end of year busy season.

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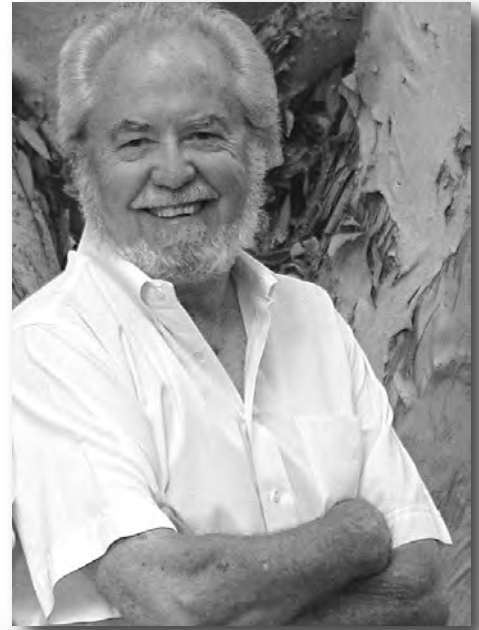
You likely received your 2019 membership renewal in the mailbox in mid-March. If you haven't responded, now is the time! Use the form on the back of this newsletter, or renew online at <http://www.altadenahistoricalsociety.org/join.html> Thank you in advance for your support.

Coming Soon

AHS is pioneering a new sponsorship program for Altadena businesses and organizations. This issue we're featuring three generous sponsors who are making it possible to publish our new book, "Altadena Boyhood," by Richard Bale. I'm sure many of you will remember his well-received lecture on growing up in Altadena in the 40s.



Based in Altadena, Prospect Park Books is a general trade publisher of print and digital books; focusing on mystery/fiction, humor, and gift titles. It also provides custom-publishing services through its "Raymond Press" imprint. They are making it possible for AHS to publish "Altadena Boyhood" this summer. Learn more at www.prospectparkbooks.com



Richard Bale came to Altadena at seven years of age and remained until the Korean war. After writing his memoirs about what life was like in 1940s Altadena for himself, his family and his friend, he has donated these memoirs, titled "Altadena Boyhood," to AHS.



Graphic designer Chris Hawley, who has 20+ years of service at JPL, plus previous decades of work in the aerospace, automotive, and industrial industry, is contributing his extensive design and production expertise to AHS as he collaborates with us on the design of "Altadena Boyhood." He also designed our 2018 exhibit, Five Men and the Mountains.

Please take the time to visit us here at the AHS Archives this coming year and find out more about us. We look forward to welcoming you.



Site of the La Vina Sanatorium – 1949

A county landfill would be at the top of Lincoln instead of houses.

In the early 1950s, when backyard incinerators were banned, the county was seeking to install a rubbish disposal site at the top of Lincoln Avenue.

In addition to objections about the need to ensure against water pollution and flood control hazards, west Altadena residents were concerned that the site “will intrude upon the community in the form of depression of property values, heavy traffic and a major topographic feature, which will tower as much as 200 to 300 feet above expensive homes and the La Vina Sanatorium only a few hundred yards away.”

The landfill was built elsewhere.

Altadena Drive would be an access road paralleling the Foothill freeway, and Fair Oaks and Marengo would be on/off ramps.

When Caltrans plans for the Foothill Freeway were in the works in the 1950s and 1960s, many local businesses were in favor of

building the highway along the base of the Altadena foothills. They had jobs and commerce in mind, not traffic congestion and pollution.

It would be a decade before anyone realized that freeways devastate neighborhoods, spew smog and

replace small business with big box retail.

The freeway was eventually awarded to Pasadena. Hundreds of homes were demolished for the 210 corridor, including several historically significant bungalows.

The public hiking area (Cobb Estate)

at the top of Lake could have been light manufacturing, a resort hotel, cemetery, or housing.

When Charles Cobb died in 1939, his 107-acre property passed through the hands of several investors interested in commercial rezoning. Residents turned down all petitions, mostly complaining about high traffic volume and limited access.

In 1956 the Marx Brothers Family Trust, purchased the property as an investment.

Six years later, the Pasadena Cemetery Association, on behalf of Mountain View, sought a zoning change to establish a cemetery. Their zoning request was also denied.

In 1971 the estate was put up for auction. Led by John Muir High School students, locals raised enough money to purchase the land and turned it over to the U.S. Forest Service for public use, avoiding the installation of hundreds of houses.



The Cobb Estate auction – 1971

the needs of a growing population.

In the 1940 and 1950s polio epidemics were becoming regular events throughout the country, primarily in cities during the summer months, paralyzing and killing multiple thousands. Children were warned not to drink from water fountains and to avoid swimming pools.

The project was abandoned in 1955 and is today the site of houses.

Some other Altadena might-have-beens: Pasadena's 36 plus annexation attempts; Incorporation; McDonalds restaurant at Lake and Altadena Drive; County animal shelter near Loma Alta park; Roller rink in the empty Albertsons Grocery store on Altadena Drive; Angeles Forest freeway tunnel to connect the valley to planned Palmdale international airport, and many others.

Some may question the wisdom of past decisions, others may praise them. But few can argue their effect on our community.

— by Jane Brackman

Four acres, south of Mendocino and east of Maiden Lane would be a **public swimming pool**.

In 1954, the county proposed a public four-acre park and swimming pool on vacant land south of Mendocino and east of Maiden Lane.

Recreational advocates had recommended the idea to enhance Eliot school's athletic program, improve recreational facilities for east Altadena, and meet



Altadena rebuffs Pasadena's annexation proposal – 1926

What's Up at AHS

New to the Collection

One of the joys of working at the AHS Archives is the anticipation we all feel when a visitor walks in our door. We never know if we'll be helping someone research their home, find answers to queries about people or events, or just learn about the Historical Society and what we do. And we're especially excited when visitors bring us books, artifacts, maps, and images that add to our understanding of Altadena's history.

Here are the latest additions to our collection. **Timothy Blewett** donated two pewter souvenir cups from Mount Lowe, along with several silver souvenir spoons from his collection. Brother **Steve Blewett** contributed equipment used by topographer Don McLain.

David Boucher brought us a pamphlet from the dedication of Fire House 12 on Lincoln Avenue and the front page of the "Altadenan" newspaper reporting on the 1971 earthquake (see more on page 8.) **Mary Lou Langedyke** donated a brochure from the Tennessee State Capitol containing a picture of an early mural by Jirayr Zorthian, and **JoBea Holt** gave us the results of her research on her Midlothian home.

Paul Ayers gave us a collection of Mount Lowe maps and plans which also included some great examples of Pacific Electric's advertising posters. Thanks to sisters **Arlene Spaniol** and **Karen Ledterman** we now

have a working 8mm projector, family home movies, and memorabilia from Loma Alta Elementary and Eliot Junior High.

Of special interest are copies of the "Altadenan" newspapers focusing on area disasters contributed by **Charles Blakelee**, and photos with accompanying tear sheets



taken by **Terry Andruess** when he was a photographer for the "Altadena Chronicle" in the late 1970s.

Additions to our library include "Mojave Road in 1863" from **Jane**

Brackman, "I Toto" from **Beth Cassioli**, a Boy's Republic history from **Boys Republic Thrift Shop**, "Theodore Parker Lukens, Father of Forestry" from **Daria Topousis**, "Bungalow Designs: Exteriors," a raffle prize from a local history conference, and seven local history books including a valuable copy of Sarah Noble Ives' history of Altadena from **Tom Davis**.



First Saturday Open House with Paul Ayers

Getting to Know You

Have you visited our Altadena Historical Society Archives lately? We look forward to welcoming members and history buffs at our headquarters in the Altadena Community Center. We want to get to know you, tell you about Altadena's rich history, and hear your experiences and memories of our great community.

New accessible weekend hours

Are you interested in Altadena's history but can't come in during our regular 9am to 1pm Monday, Tuesday and Friday business hours? To make it easier for students and people who work, Altadena Historical Society is now open from 2pm to 4pm on the first Saturday of every month.

These First Saturday Open Houses are your chance to check out our collections, view our museum exhibit, and talk informally with knowledgeable people.

Themes from past open houses include our map collection, Christmas Tree Lane history,

Paul Ayers' Mount Lowe history collection, Altadena Guild Home Tour history, and unusual artifacts from our attic.

Our friendly volunteers look forward to seeing you at future First Saturdays – rain or shine. You never know what you'll discover.

Talk with us on Facebook and Instagram

Thanks to everyone who helped us exceed our goal of 1000 page likes by the end of 2018.

Now that we've hit our goal, we want to keep growing. If you haven't liked our FB page, check it out.

We post a lot of interesting content, from old newspaper clippings to oral history interviews with Altadenans who have made our community



Souvenir Koala

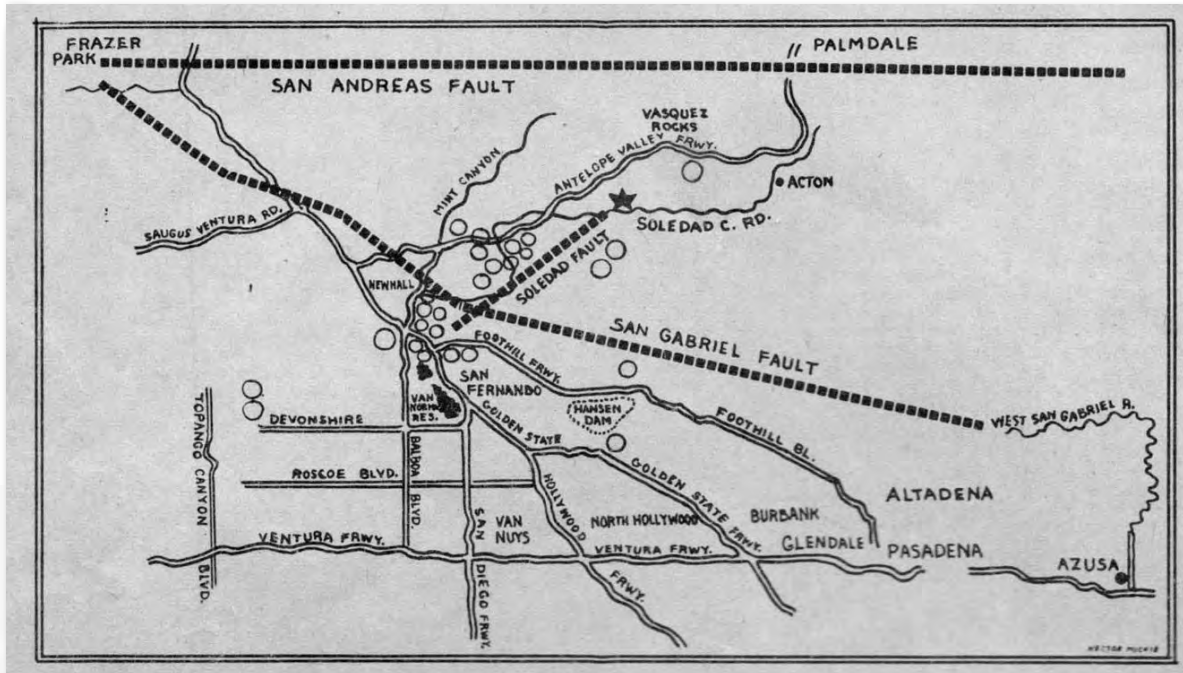
the special place it is.

Some of our most popular posts have been about old gas stations, interesting objects that people donated to us (did you see the stuffed koala brought back from a fishing trip to Australia with Zane Grey?), and images of our town over the years.

Do you have content you'd like to see us post? Let us know! We're on Facebook and Instagram, so follow us and share some of your stories about Altadena.

— by Jean Phillips

Altadena Shakes, Rattles and Rolls



Map of quake area – 1971. The large circle northwest of San Fernando marks the epicenter. The line emerging from Frazier Park is the ancient San Gabriel Fault, a supposed inactive arm of the San Andreas. It crosses to the rear of Mt. Wilson.

This article, written by retired fire captain David Boucher, was inspired by the front page of the “Altadenan” newspaper found in the Los Angeles County Fire Museum Collection. It had been donated by retired Assistant Chief John Barton, who served in the foothill area in the 1960s. It is now part of our collection in Altadena Historical Society’s Archives where it can be viewed by visitors.

At 6 a.m. on February 9, 1971, Altadenans – along with thousands of others throughout Los Angeles and Ventura Counties – awakened to

rumbling sounds and the ground moving beneath them. Although it happened 48 years ago, the 1971 earthquake is still recalled by Altadenans who experienced it.

Laurie Kinsinger, who lived on Pentagon Street, remembers trying to run down an enclosed east/west staircase that was moving north and south. Mary Landau lost her chimney and watched a crack open in her bedroom floor.

On duty at Fire Station 42

in Rosemead, I saw our fire truck’s driver, Thomas Pimm, start the engine, drive the truck out on the ramp, then jump out of the cab onto the sidewalk of



John Nordquist Associate Research Engineer at California Institute of Technology and resident of Altadena feeds information into computer that will analyze and report on location - 1971

Valley Boulevard – in his underwear.

The Sylmar quake, as it



Thrifty Drug Store on Lake Avenue at Mendocino left in shambles after the 1971 Sylmar earthquake.

was called, was rated at 6.6 on the Richter Scale – weaker than the 1994 Northridge quake and stronger than the 6.3 Long Beach quake of 1933. California Institute of Technology seismologists were quick to analyze the quake and track the aftershocks.

The quake was centered five miles or so north of Newhall in a complex of smaller faults and caused damage within a 30-mile radius of the epicenter. Losses in Los Angeles County totaled around \$210,000,000, with most

occurring in the San Fernando Valley. The Veteran's Home north of Pacoima collapsed, as did part of Olive View Medical Center in Sylmar (40 people were killed in those collapses) and there was severe damage to the 155/210 freeway interchange and the Van Norman Dam.

The San Gabriel Valley was also affected. According to the "Altadenan," the sky lighted intermittently throughout the San Gabriel Valley as transformers and power lines gave way, but by late morning, power to Altadena and other foothill

communities was restored.

Altadena Hardware, Wally's Pharmacy, and Polly's Dress Shop lost front windows; broken water lines caused flooding in Thrifty Drug Store on the corner of Lake Avenue and Mendocino Street; and Webster's Pharmacy reported \$3,000 damage to stock. Damage to the Altadena Library totaled between \$10,000 and \$20,000 dollars. Much of the destruction to stores and homes occurred west of Lake.

The Sylmar quake is just one of a handful of temblors occurring

since the 1930s:

1933: Long Beach – 6.3

1952: Tehachapi – 7.7

1971: Sylmar – 6.6

1987: Whittier – 5.9

1990: Sierra Madre – 6.2

1994: Northridge – 6.8

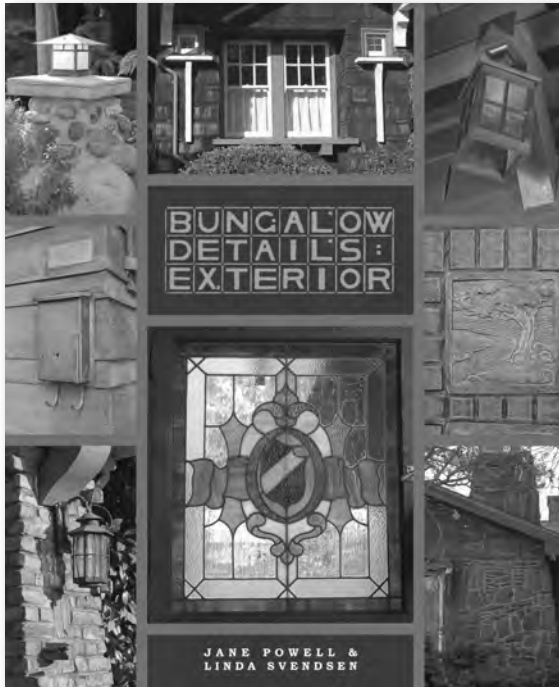
I've experienced them all except, of course, the Long Beach quake, since I was still three years from being born. Almost everyone seems to agree that we are due for another one soon. Let's hope it will not be the "Big One."

Don't miss Dave's presentation on the San Andreas Fault at our April program. (See page 11 for more information.)

— by David Boucher

Book Notes

Altadena Historical Society has a reference library available for browsing, research and entertainment. Here are two new additions to our AHS reference library. We invite you to stop by and enjoy them.



“Bungalow Details: Exterior” by Jane Powell & Linda Svendsen, 2004

If you love bungalow homes (and who doesn't?) this is a book you'll find fascinating. Beautifully illustrated, not only is it written with wit and some surprising puns (“A tile told by an idiot”, “Swinging shingles”) but it also contains thoughtful comment on the nature of the “Arts and Crafts”

movement.

“Even the simplest bungalows were once old growth timber. Every stud, every piece of siding was once a living thing. That should be honored,” the authors say.

Did you know the origins of this style were in India?

Facts are accompanied by resources for almost anything related to a bungalow home – fences, gates, chimneys, hardware, roofing, windows and anything else a bungalow owner (or simply a bungalow fan) might wish to know.

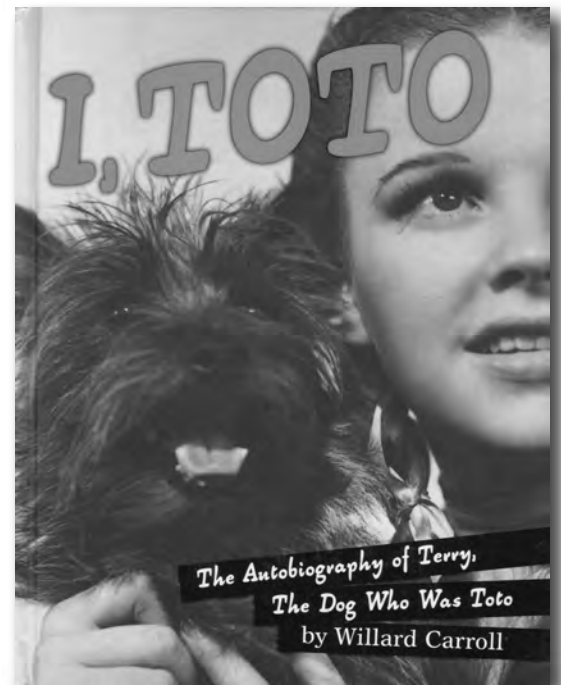
“I Toto...the Autobiography of Terry, the Dog who was Toto” by Willard Carroll, 2001

Did you know that the canine star of “The Wizard of Oz” was a female born in Altadena? We didn't either until it was brought to our attention by visitor Joe Nania.

In 1933, our heroine was born in Altadena and adopted by a Pasadena couple who didn't understand house training. They wound up dumping Toto (birth name Terry) on Carl Spitz, a famous dog trainer for film work.

He used very different techniques to help her understand that it's NOT acceptable to urinate on movie stars' shoes and launched her into a fine acting career. She worked in at least 14 films.

The Spitz's ultimately adopted Toto and she lived a fascinating life. Her “autobiography” is told in Toto's own voice, and tells of her encounters with such stars as Clark Gable (a very embarrassing incident marred "Toto's" introduction to him!), Shirley Temple, Spencer Tracy, Margaret



Hamilton, Judy Garland and others.

A fast read, this book is original, witty, thought-provoking and sweet. And you'll fall in love with the author.

— by Pam Wright

Coming Events

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

● **April 2019: Altadena Guild Home Tour Exhibit Opens**

A comprehensive history of Altadena Guild home tours, from 1951 to the present, with photos and information on the homes featured each year. In the Community Center Lobby.

● **May 4, 2019: First Saturday Open House – Explore our Library**

Books of special historical interest in our library will be on display.

● **June 2019: AHS Parlor Talk**

The first of a series of parlor talks in historic sites just for premium and supporting members. Title, date and location to be announced.

● **July 22, 2019: Quarterly Program: Owen Brown**

Local historian Paul Ayers will speak on Abolitionist John Brown's son Owen and his life in Altadena.

● **August, 2019: Book Launch, "Altadena Boyhood"**

Author Richard Bale will discuss his new book on growing up in Altadena in the 40s. Date and location to be announced.

FREE

Following the Fault

An Illustrated Lecture on the San Andreas Fault Presented by the Altadena Historical Society

Visible evidence of California's famous San Andreas Fault will be on view at Altadena Historical Society's spring program, "Following the Fault" on Monday, April 22, at 7:00 p.m.

The program will take place in the Altadena Community Center, 730 E. Altadena Drive, located next door to the Altadena Sheriff's station.



Pressure ridge just north of the San Andreas Fault near Palmdale.

Retired fire captain Dave Boucher will discuss the adventurous trek he and Union Oil geologist, Jack Van Amringe, undertook in search of the San Andreas Fault. Beginning at the Salton

Sea, they followed the fault until it goes out to sea near Point Arena in Northern California.

Boucher will describe their 2014 journey, which took six months and required seven trips, illustrating their discoveries with photographs he took along the way. "I became interested in geology when I took a course at Pasadena City College," he states, "I've always been fascinated by how the earth's movements have shaped our world."

His presentation will include stops in Thousand Palms, the Cajon Pass, Wrightwood, Gorman, the Carrizo Plain, San Bruno, Pacifica and other sites where signs of the fault are apparent.

The program is open to the public. There is no charge for AHS members; donations from non-members are appreciated.

Information on earthquake preparedness will be available in the lobby of the Community Center.



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VISIT OUR BLOG!

altadenahistoricalsociety.blogspot.com

Altadena Historical Society (AHS), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization was founded to gather, preserve, and make available information about the people, places and events that have shaped Altadena's past.

Please join or renew today!

Name _____

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