



The Echo

Volume 93

Number 2

Where the Past is Present

Fall/Winter 2020

How California's Women Won the Vote

(Please note: The Echo usually covers subjects focused on the historical Altadena area. However, this issue covers a topic which had impact both on and over the entire State of California and we've chosen to take a wider view.)

Suffrage for women in most of the United States emerged from a long and often bitter battle. The story of how California women were among the earliest to secure voting rights is complex and fascinating.

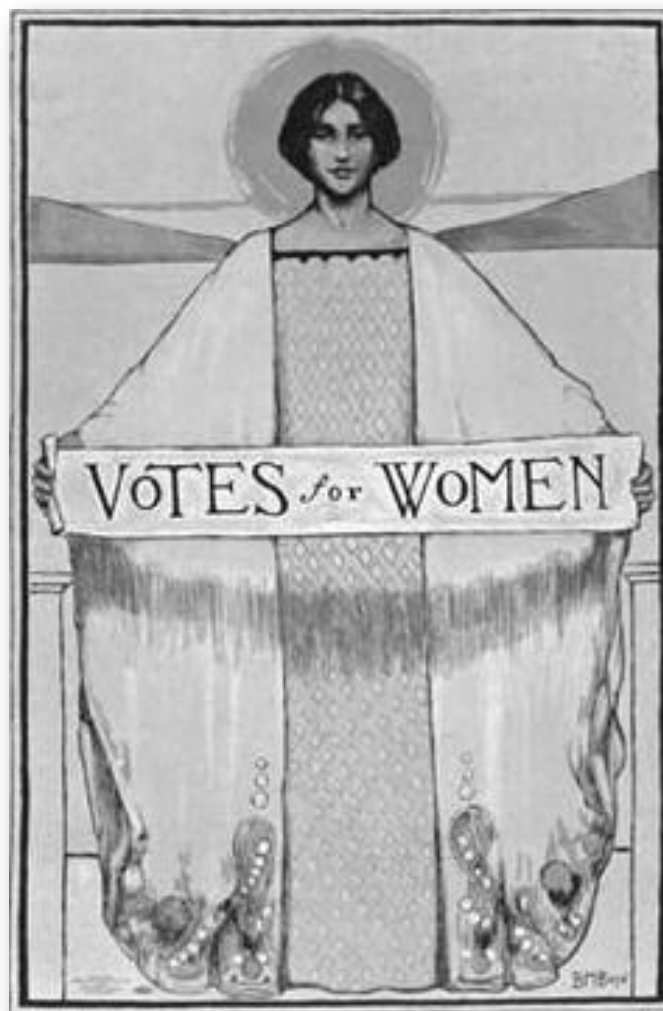
"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that All men are created equal..."

These famously inspiring words were used by some anti-suffragists to justify denial of women's votes. Others raised as many objections as their personal agendas could create.

The *Los Angeles Times* was vehemently against the issue, publishing such comments as: "We mean, in every lawful and legitimate way, to oppose the adoption of the constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote.... We are not fighting women. We are fighting for women, fighting lest the efforts of an over-enthusiastic minority should succeed in imposing useless burdens upon the women of our State."

The *Times* also

Coming Soon
100 Years of Lights:
The Story of
Christmas Tree Lane
—See page 11



1911 women's suffrage poster

printed this... "Thousands of women all over the State of California are praying today that the men who love and cherish them will not force them into the field of politics--a realm as unsuited to the nature of the normal woman as that of plowing the fields, shouldering the

continued on page 4

President's Letter *by Eric Mulfinger*

Much has happened since the last issue of *The Echo*! Soon after it was published, we closed our archives to the public because of the coronavirus pandemic. We have been able, however, to continue to respond to research requests and other inquiries.

In April, with the full impact of the coronavirus pandemic becoming apparent, the Board decided to automatically renew all memberships for this year and ask for donations from those members who could afford to contribute. We also decided to reduce expenses in key areas, such as making this edition of *The*

Echo online only, avoiding the costs of printing and mailing.

We are grateful for the exceptional level of giving over the summer. Your gifts have allowed us to focus on two initiatives during the last five months:

First, expanding our archives and our outreach to include the neglected aspects of our community's history, has become a top priority. Read the article on the next page for more about the stories we plan to collect and publicize.

Secondly, we know our presence online needs to be increased and amplified. With the help of the Altadena Library we hosted our first online Quarterly Presentation in August, and our website is being rebuilt in WordPress. We're excited about the opportunity to bring you more virtual programming and web-based information in the future.

In addition, national, state, and county level elections (plus the Altadena Library's Measure Z) are upon us, and our voting day is almost here. One contest that may have slipped under your radar, however, is the Altadena Town Council election. Our Town Council has been around for 45 years,



and its 16 members represent the eight census tracts in our unincorporated community.

Without a city government, it is the most direct vehicle for Altadenans to express their views and preferences to the County Board of Supervisors. Voting for the Town Council will occur on Tuesday November 3 and Saturday November 7. To find your polling place, your census tract, and information about the candidates, visit the Altadena Town Council website at <http://altadenaelection.org/>

Thank you all for your continued support and interest!

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Reflecting Altadena's History in Voice and Vision

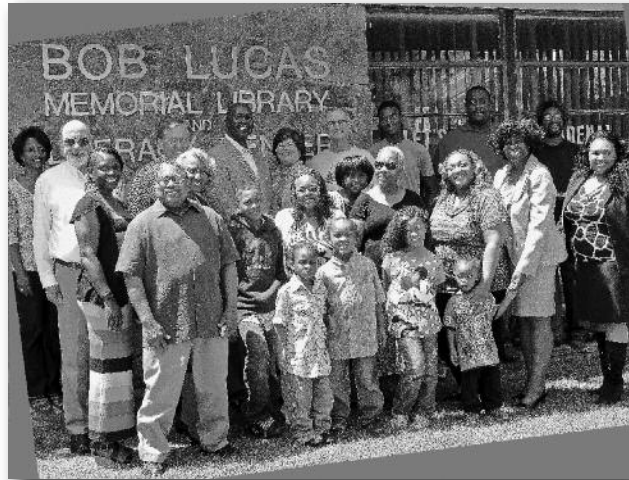
Dear Altadena Residents,

Altadena Historical Society (AHS) has been preserving and sharing the history of our community since 1935. However, we

have sometimes fallen short in capturing the full history of **all** its residents.

Altadena is one of the most racially diverse communities in Los Angeles County, a fact which brings pride to many of us. However, our

archives contain more about our first families and other



white residents because their stories are more easily collected.

We have been frustrated for several years because, while we have some collections about people of color, we're missing their stories and their personal experiences.

We are asking for your help to chronicle voices and stories long left unheard so we can share them with our entire community.

We are eager to collect photos, diaries, letters, oral histories, and other artifacts from the Black, Japanese American, Latinx, Indigenous, and other people of color in Altadena. We are committed to ensuring that cultures and voices represented within Altadena's historical narrative reflect our true and complete history.

Do you have records you could donate? Do you have pictures like the ones on this page we could digitize or copy for preservation and sharing? How about stories you could share in a recorded interview? Do you know someone who could help us find and capture these special memories?

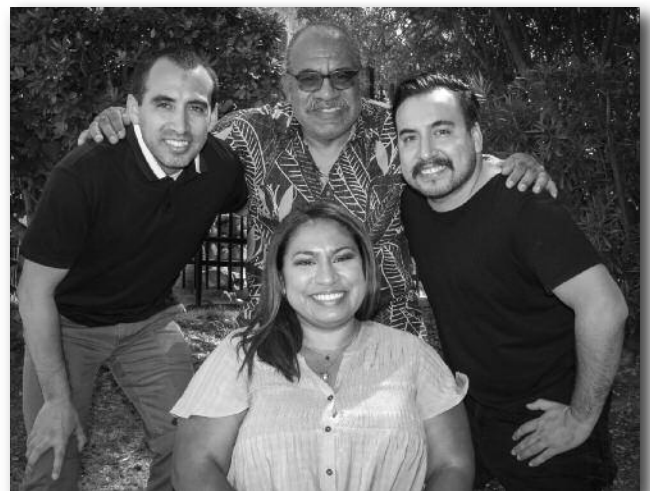
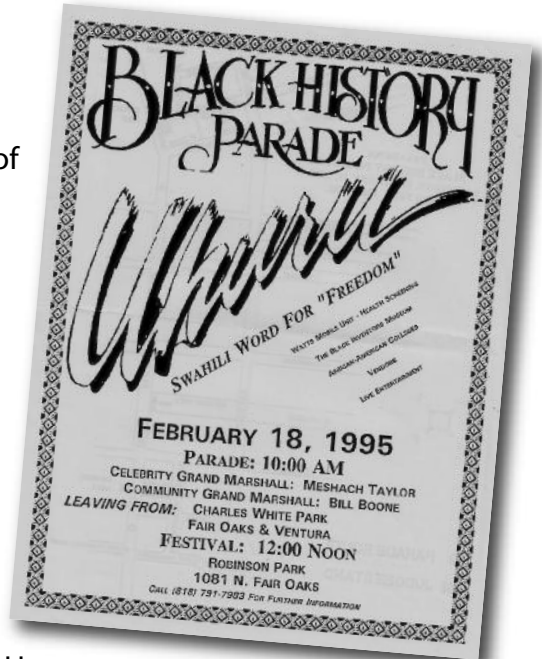
Together we can make sure current and future generations understand the rich history of our community. With your help we will expand our collection and share your stories through our newsletters, our programs, and exhibits.

This is a journey toward inclusion. We pledge to stay the course.

If you can help, please email us at altadenahistorical.society@yahoo.com.

Thank you!

AHS



Altadena's Estrada family – photos by Deb Squared Photo

musket or handling the bayonet."

The *San Francisco Chronicle*, the Democratic party and some Roman Catholic organizations spoke against the effort.

And the State Legislature warned – "*Your wife is elected to Legislature and your daughter is elected constable and you are at home taking care of the babies.*" (James Caples, *Sacramento delegate, Second Constitutional Convention, 1879.*)



Willard Huntington Wright (who wrote the Philo Vance crime novels popular at the time) claimed women didn't need the vote for they already ran the world by "sheer force of femininity--womanliness, grace, charm, softness, beauty and the maternal capacity." Then, somewhat ungallantly, he added "The demand for equal rights comes, in a measure, from those women whose attractiveness is so run down at the heels

that they are unable to command the market quotation."

The fight was waged for decades before a referendum was finally held in 1896. This earlier effort failed, partially because many men believed women would vote to ban the sale of alcohol.

After 15 more years of campaigning, Proposition 4 (or Senate Constitutional Amendment 8) granting women the right to vote appeared on the ballot after Katherine Edson came to the movement through a campaign for enforceable pure milk laws. She led a delegation of L.A. women to convince California Progressives to put the issue on the Oct. 1911 ballot.

There were only nine months to organize – and the campaigning began.

Famous leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Alice Paul were leading the call across the country, while here in California, less-familiar but equally strong voices rose to take on the challenge.



Naomi Anderson

Naomi Anderson: An African-American suffragist, she traveled throughout the state to campaign for women's votes. Born in Indiana, she arrived in San Francisco in the 1890s. She lectured and wrote, insisting that denying votes to African-American women long after their male counterparts had that right continued to enslave them.

The Fannie Jackson Coppin Club: This group was formed in Oakland in 1899 by women of Beth Eden Baptist Church. The first club for African American women in that city, it was named for Fannie Jackson Coppin, the first African American woman to become a school principal. Many members were active in suffragism, inspiring other clubs throughout the state. Their motto was "Deeds, Not Words" and "Lifting as We Climb."



Lydia Flood-Jackson

Lydia Flood-Jackson: Born to politically active parents in Brooklyn, CA, she possessed many skills, including entrepreneur, inventor of cosmetics and perfumes, civil rights activist, and leadership within the

suffrage community. She served as leader of the California Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, with Hettie B. Tilghman, Melba Stafford and Willa Henry.

Charlotta Spears Bass: A passionate social reformer, she published the State's largest African-American newspaper (the California Eagle) and wrote pro-suffrage editorials from Los Angeles. She went on to confront the KKK and ran for Vice President of the U.S. on the Progressive Party ticket in 1952.

Georgiana K. Offutt: She wrote for the California Eagle (see above) and was also a prominent leader of the suffrage cause--both uncommon achievements among Black women in the early 20th century. She was widely respected in the suffrage movement and was elected Second Vice President of the Alameda County League of Colored Women Voters. Along with two other Black women, Emma Lou Sayers, and Dr. Vada J. Somerville, Offutt developed a voter education program for Black men and women which ensured informed and intelligent voting.



Maria de Lopez

Maria de Lopez: Maria Guadalupe Evangelina Lopez was born in San Gabriel and graduated from Pasadena High School in 1897. She taught at L.A. High School and also at UCLA. President of the College Equal Suffrage League, she

served as Spanish translator for the movement. She was the first woman to give a speech in Spanish in support of suffrage at the Votes for Women Club's large rally on Oct. 3, 1911. She was also chosen to march in a Washington, DC Suffrage Parade and toured California to lecture and advocate for suffrage.

Votes for Women Club: Selina Solomons came from a Sephardic Jewish family in San Francisco. She created the Votes for Women Club to appeal to shop clerks and workers on Union Square. Suffragist literature was available there along with a campaign to eliminate the "white slave trade" (a euphemism for enforced prostitution.) Her primary motive was to bring the struggle for votes to "middle and lower-class women."

Other well-known members of Votes for Women Club were Miss Mary Foy (L.A. City's 3rd librarian) who lived adjacent to Arroyo Seco, and Clara Shortridge Foltz, the first female lawyer in California. Clara created the concept of public defenders. At age 63, she went up in a hot air balloon to scatter leaflets printed on "suffrage yellow" paper. (The County Criminal Courts building in downtown L.A. is named for her.)



Ty Leung - casting her vote

Ty Leung: Active in social work among the Chinese in San Francisco, she was the first Chinese-American woman to vote. The Studebaker-Flanders company took advantage of her prominence to use her image in one of their cars as a publicity shot.

These women were organizers, planners,

and campaigners. "Every legitimate method of campaigning was used, beginning with the printing of 900,000 leaflets and brochures ... in many languages; pageants, plays, concerts and public social functions; the placarding of city billboards over miles of county ... huge electric and other signs; long weeks of automobile campaigning in the country and the villages; special speakers; a handsome float in the labor day parade; speaking at vaudeville shows." (Mrs. David C. McCan, *West Coast Magazine*, July 1912)

"A large photograph of Miss Anthony and Miss Shaw was given for every \$2 pledge, and many poor seamstresses and washerwomen fulfilled their pledges in twenty-five cent installments. And there were teachers and stenographers and other working women who went without a winter coat to give money to this movement for freedom." ("Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony", Ida Husted Harper, 1898)



Commercial postcard with "positive images" of suffragists @1908

Although Los Angeles promoted itself as a white, middle-class city, it never really was, and its suffragists knew they would need a diverse coalition. A substantial minority of the city at that time was Mexican or of Mexican descent, including Maria de Lopez, whose family had come to the San Gabriel Valley in 1849.

Clubwomen, Progressives and Socialists all worked for the cause, and the College Equal Suffrage League and the Wage Earners Suffrage League played important roles. California's diverse communities provided essential support through articles in Spanish, Chinese, German, Portuguese

and even Italian.

White middle-class women's clubs, unions, church groups, Black self-help groups, temperance groups and Socialists all incorporated the issue into their day-to-day "grassroots" community work.

They believed that if women could vote, they could clean up dirty politics and cure social ills, such as child labor, prostitution, and poverty. Lack of enfranchisement became a powerful symbol, unifying women from all walks of life.

Many political movements flourished in California in the early 1900s, hoping for a more egalitarian society. It was hoped that women voters would help bring economic and political justice to a state controlled by wealthy corporations. The Women's Socialist Union of California was formed in 1902. The Women's International Union Label League championed women's protective legislation, unionization, and suffrage.

However, they still faced fierce opposition. The *Los Angeles Times* continued its attacks on the campaign and the city's powerful railroad interests launched barrages based on their fear that women would vote to implement more government regulations. The Chair of the State Democratic Party called women's suffrage "a disease," advocated by the "mannish female politician and the little effeminate, sissy man."

The Southern California Association, opposed to Woman Suffrage, published a stinging letter in the *Times* claiming "The vast majority of California women do not want to vote.... The suffrage movement is a backward step in civilization."

Even so, the suffragists didn't let up! In a



Spanish language flyer

massive get out the vote effort, they drove voters to polls in an estimated 260 automobiles. “Mothers take your sons. Girls, take your sweethearts, your brothers or your fathers!” Prohibited from being within 120 feet of polling places or talking to voters, they stood in silent ranks, holding up posters demanding “a square deal” for women.

Early returns suggested the measure had lost. But, as distant district reports trickled in, the “yes” side began pulling ahead and, two days later, headlines announced that the amendment had squeezed out a narrow victory...winning by about 1.5%. Voters of Los Angeles were largely responsible for the victory, offsetting anti-suffrage votes in San Francisco and Alameda counties.

Remember those blatant editorials condemning the suffrage movement? Ironically, just two months later, the *Times'* front page read: “The Times appeals to the intelligent women of Los Angeles to register and vote” in a fiercely contested mayoral race between incumbent George Alexander and the Socialist challenger, Job Harriman, who was very unpopular with the *Times'* staff. Alexander won.

One hundred and five years ago, fewer than 4,000 votes changed the course of California history. Had these votes not been cast, women in California would have had to wait another nine years to make their voices heard. In 1911, just a handful of votes advanced civil rights for thousands, proving that votes matter.

Proposition 4 did not, however, extend the right to vote for all women in California. By 1920, at least one-third of Indigenous Americans were considered “wards of the nation” by the US government and were denied the right to vote, even after the passage of the 19th amendment, until 1924

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prevented Asian Americans from casting their ballots, and Puerto Rican women could not vote until 1935 when the literacy requirement was removed.

Both Native Americans and Asian Americans continued the fight. Zitkala-Sa, a Native activist (AKA Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) noted as much in a speech to the National Woman’s Party after the amendment was ratified, saying that “the Indian woman rejoices with you,” but



Women’s suffrage parade

adding the reminder that many Indigenous women still lacked the right that White women had won. Chinese-Americans such as activist Mabel Lee led a suffrage parade in New York City – on horseback.

Other States voted for women’s suffrage, but the Federal Government did not. The campaign to secure that right went to Washington DC and got militant. Eventually, of course, after suffering and struggle, imprisonments and turmoil, the 19th amendment passed. The struggle for voting goes on.

As Alice Paul said, “Freedom has come, not as a gift, but as a triumph.”

Notes: In addition to those already quoted, sources for this collection include: Wikipedia, Chinese Historical Society, Women’s Heritage Museum, Celebrating Women’s Suffrage, sos.ca.gov, California.com.

— Pam Wright

Kate Duncan – A Pioneer in Fashion Design

If you're in the mood for some exercise and a bit of history, too, walk along on Altadena Drive, then turn north on Maiden Lane. On your immediate left is a tribute that reads, "The Kate Duncan House, 1915, Property acquired in 1906 by Col. George G. Green, and sold to pioneer dress designer Mrs. Kate Duncan in 1914".



Kate Duncan

Who was Kate Duncan? She was a woman who forged her own path at a time when most women didn't. She lived in Altadena, made her career in Pasadena with enough income to successfully invest in real

estate, was married and divorced, lived single and independently, and loved her family generously.

Kate constructed three notable houses: A Pasadena home that after substantial modification, would eventually become the magnificent Duncan-Irwin House; a large house in Altadena built in the Prairie School style, and a handsome two story southwest style home overlooking the north part of the Arroyo Seco. All three houses still stand

Kathryn Mohn was born in Flatrock, Ohio, in 1865. In 1885 she married James Duncan, who was employed as a "motorman". The marriage lasted less than

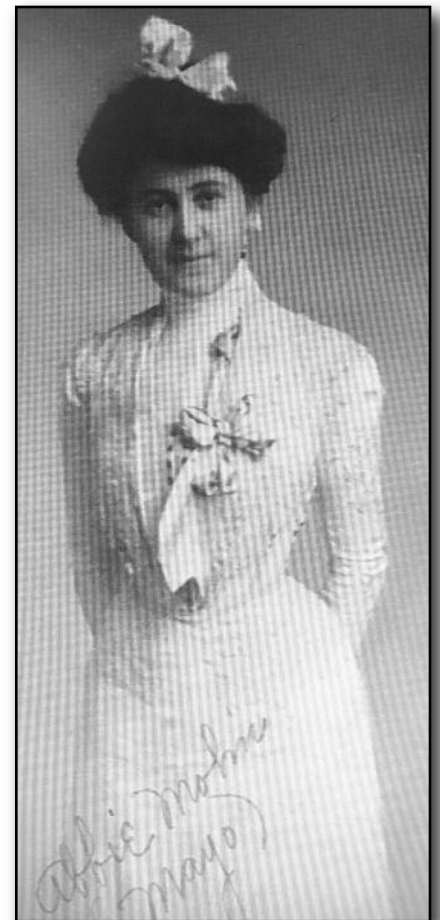
a month; a legal divorce followed four years later.

In 1886, when she was 21, Kate landed in Pasadena. After successful treatment for tuberculosis, she found employment as a companion to the daughter of Governor Edward Markham.

In 1895 she set up a seamstress shop on Green Street and Fair Oaks Avenue, in a building owned and managed by Col. G. G. Green. Green, a flamboyant character from New Jersey, made a fortune in patent medicines. In 1888 he and his family built a large house in Altadena where they "wintered" each year.

In 1900 Kate purchased a lot at 240 N. Grand, Pasadena, with a magnificent view of the San Gabriel Mountains, which overlooked the Arroyo Seco where the Rose Bowl stadium sits today. She moved her modest cottage to the site and hired architects Charles and Henry Greene to transform it into a six-room transitional-style craftsman house.

She sold the house 6 years later to Theodore Irwin Jr. of Oswego, New York. Irwin brought back Greene and Greene to make substantial changes to the home. They built a magnificent house in the Arts and Crafts style. Today, called the Duncan-Irwin House, it stands



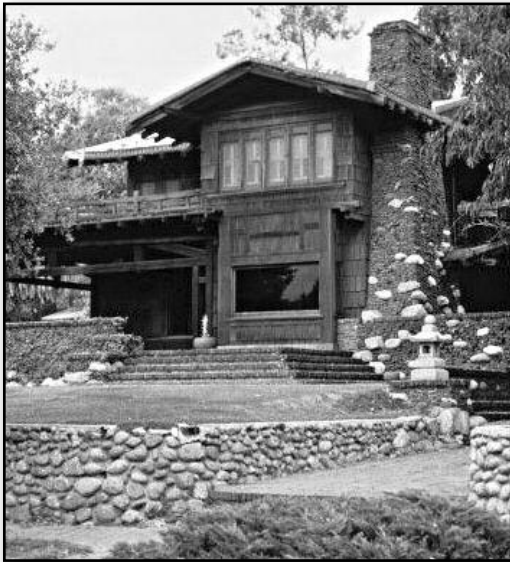
Sister Abbie in dress designed by Kate

as one of the finest examples of their work.

About the same time she sold the house, she moved her shop from what is now called The Castle Green Annex to 12 S. Euclid. Shortly after, she moved again, to 30 S. Los Robles and at that time probably rebranded herself as a fashion designer. With a small staff of seamstresses, her shop made elaborate hats and dresses for wealthy Pasadena Society ladies.

Soon after establishing herself with her patrons, Kate and her head seamstress, Helen Weingarth, took time off to tour the world. It may have been to buy fabric, as we know they spent time in India, a source for high-quality cotton.

In 1914 she purchased a vacant lot in



The Duncan Irwin house – Pasadena

surrounded by windows for natural lighting, served as her design studio. The home cost more than \$12,000, a large sum for the time, when the average cost of homes was about \$5000.

During her most productive years she



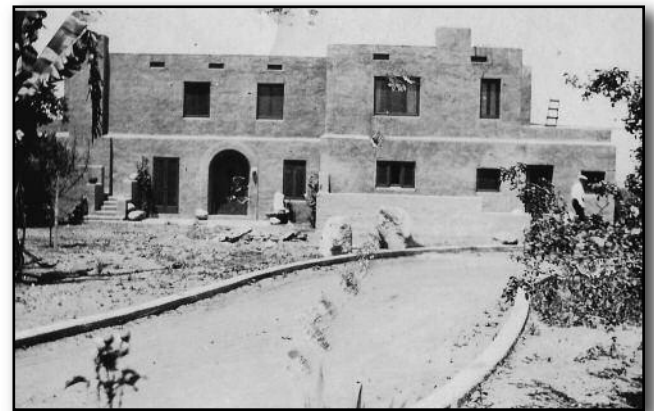
Beckett Hall - Altadena

purchased homes in Altadena for her parents, brother, sister, her nephew William Gus Mohn for whom she'd been guardian, and her head seamstress Helen Weingarth.

Kate was close to her brother's daughter, Bessie. They traveled cross-country together by automobile and were known to make their own repairs and

change tires when necessary.

She retired from dressmaking in 1920 at age 55, but continued to keep herself busy with family, friends and real estate.



Kate Mohn (Duncan) house - Pasadena

She designed and built a large two-story home at 945 Shelly Street, on a substantial piece of property overlooking the north section of the Arroyo Seco. She hired her brother, Harry C. Mohn, to build the house in the Southwest style.

Kate died in 1985 at age 81 and is buried at Mountain View Cemetery.

Although we've learned a lot about Kate Duncan lately, with the help of her family and historian Tim Gregory, we're curious about her business and her dress designs. If you know more about Kate Mohn Duncan, please let us know.

— Jane Brackman

What's Up at AHS?

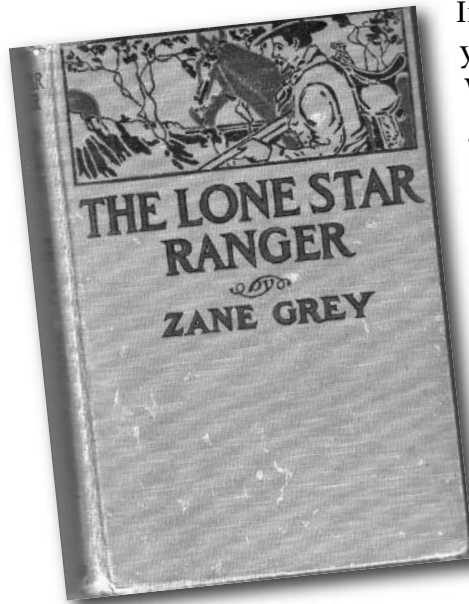
Things are a bit different at the Altadena Historical Society right now. For one thing, we're closed to the public as long as Los Angeles County buildings remain closed. However, we're working hard to keep in touch with our members through e-mail and social media.

Our quarterly programs will occur online for now. We're grateful to Pablo Miralles, whose film "Can't We All Get Along?" provided the topic for a lively Zoom discussion about the segregation of John Muir High School. We're equally grateful to the Altadena Library for their technical assistance.

At the end of each month members receive an online newsletter, "Notes from the Archives," featuring interesting images and stories from our collection. "The Echo," our twice-a-year 12-page publication, is still alive and well on our

website, www.altadenahistoricalsociety.org., and e-mailed to our members.

If you're not checking our Facebook and Instagram pages, you should be. We're proud of our growing following of people interested in the history we post each Monday and Friday. We welcome comments – viewers often provide us with new and illuminating information.



New to the Collection

Even in these uncertain times, donations to the Archives are continuing. **Tom Maloney** sent us a hardback copy of Zane Grey's western "The Lone Star Ranger"; and **Jane Brackman** donated a copy of "The Pacific Crest Trailway," compiled by Altadenan Clifford C. Clarke who lived on Mariposa Street.

Jane also gave us a postcard of the Armstrong House on the corner of Mariposa and Marengo, after it became the John Homan School for Boys, which was often fondly remembered by former District Attorney John Van de Kamp who attended it when it was known as the Trailblazers School. On the back of the postcard is a first person account of the 1938 flood by visitors to Altadena. Photographs of Braeburn after that flood came to us from **Jeff Sedlik**.

Fred Smith sent us a great addition to our collection of early Altadena – snapshots and digital copies of photos taken by his great uncle, Harry J. Smith, who drove for the Scripps Kellogg family in the early



John Homan School for Boys



**Mrs. Kellogg and the Scripps' residence
— May 1908**

1900s. The include images of the family and friends in Altadena and on vacations.

In response to our call for stories and information about our diverse population, **Paul Ayers** sent us a photograph of a billboard promoting a restricted development plus documentation of Mount Lowe Railway Trail's 2000 designation as a Millennium Trail; **Jerry Friedman** provided digital photos of a Black Lives Matter protest in



Altadena; **Kay Toll** recommended people with stories to tell; and **Eugene Hutchins** gave us information on Tuskegee Airman Oliver Goodall. **Steve Haussler** contributed a file his mother, Astrid Ellerseik, kept which includes articles on desegregation in Pasadena Unified School District, and a scrapbook which records efforts to enforce restrictive covenants in the Farnsworth Park area.

Thanks to everyone who helps us improve and deepen our collection.

Coming Soon

100 Years of Lights: The Story of Christmas Tree Lane



Christmas Tree Lane — 1947

Christmas lights first lit Santa Rosa Avenue's deodars on December 24, 1920.

This December, Christmas Tree Lane celebrates its 100th birthday. To celebrate Christmas Tree Lane's centennial year, Altadena Library and Altadena Historical Society, with the help of Christmas Tree Lane Association member Mary Landau, will present a virtual tour of this national landmark on Saturday, December 12. This visual history replaces the annual lighting ceremony during this period of social distancing,

Watch for more information on how to see it!

— Jean Philips



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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!

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☐ \$35 Membership

☐ \$60 Premium Membership

☐ \$125 Supporting Membership

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