

Eden



Eden

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Above: Detail of the Degnan Grotto. Photo by Gina Guerra.



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Above: *Faux bois* cacti. Photo by Gina Guerra.





The Paul R. Williams-designed Degnan Estate, in La Cañada Flintridge designed and built 1927-29. This historic photograph shows the formal rose garden, with carefully pruned boxwood *parterres*, which was lost during the later subdivision of the property. Photo courtesy Degnan family archives.

A Treasure in the Foothills: The Degnan Estate

GINA GUERRA

I will never forget the first time I saw our beloved Paul Williams home in La Cañada Flintridge. We had been living in Santa Monica in a 1920s Spanish-style house on a lovely tree-lined street. But we woke up one morning and realized that all four of the wheels on our car had been stolen overnight, a mere twenty feet from our baby's bedroom. That same day, the police raced down our narrow residential street in a high-speed pursuit of a bank robber, and we learned that a car had been stolen from our neighbor's house across the street. We decided then and there that it was time for a move.

We headed east that weekend to Pasadena, where my husband, Rod, grew up. We looked at a couple of open houses and met a realtor, who offered to show us some additional homes in the area. That night, Rod went on the internet to see what was available, and quickly called me to the computer. He said excitedly, "This is the house from the *Casa California* book!"¹

Although our realtor suggested that we would not be interested in the house because it was in such bad shape, we insisted on seeing it. I knew the minute we drove up that I wanted to buy this house.

It was, indeed, in horrible condition. It had been empty and on the market for years. There was water damage on the ceilings. The electrical system was outdated knob-and-tube, the radiant heater did not work, the plumbing was old and in need of replacement, and the septic system barely functioned. There was even a rat's nest behind the radiator in the living room! But it was also spectacular. There were Spanish Renaissance/*Plateresco* style elements throughout, including the gorgeous entrance with its semi-circular "Juliet" balcony and the intricate doorway replicated in the interior.² The elegant black-and-white marble floor in the ballroom was so beautifully crafted that you could smoothly roll a quarter from end to end without so much as a wobble. And the garden, while crum-

Opposite: The *allée* leading to the south terrace of the Degnan Estate was also lost in the subdivision. Photo courtesy Degnan family archives.





Above: The swimming pool's unique decorative concrete wall still surrounds it today. Photo courtesy Degnan family archives.

Opposite: Film star Dennis Morgan in the swimming pool with children Kristen and Stanley, ca. late 1940s.

bling and strangled by rodent-infested ivy, was begging to be uncovered and restored to its 1920s glory. We were hooked.³

PAUL R. WILLIAMS AND DOROTHY DEGNAN: A MAGICAL COMBINATION

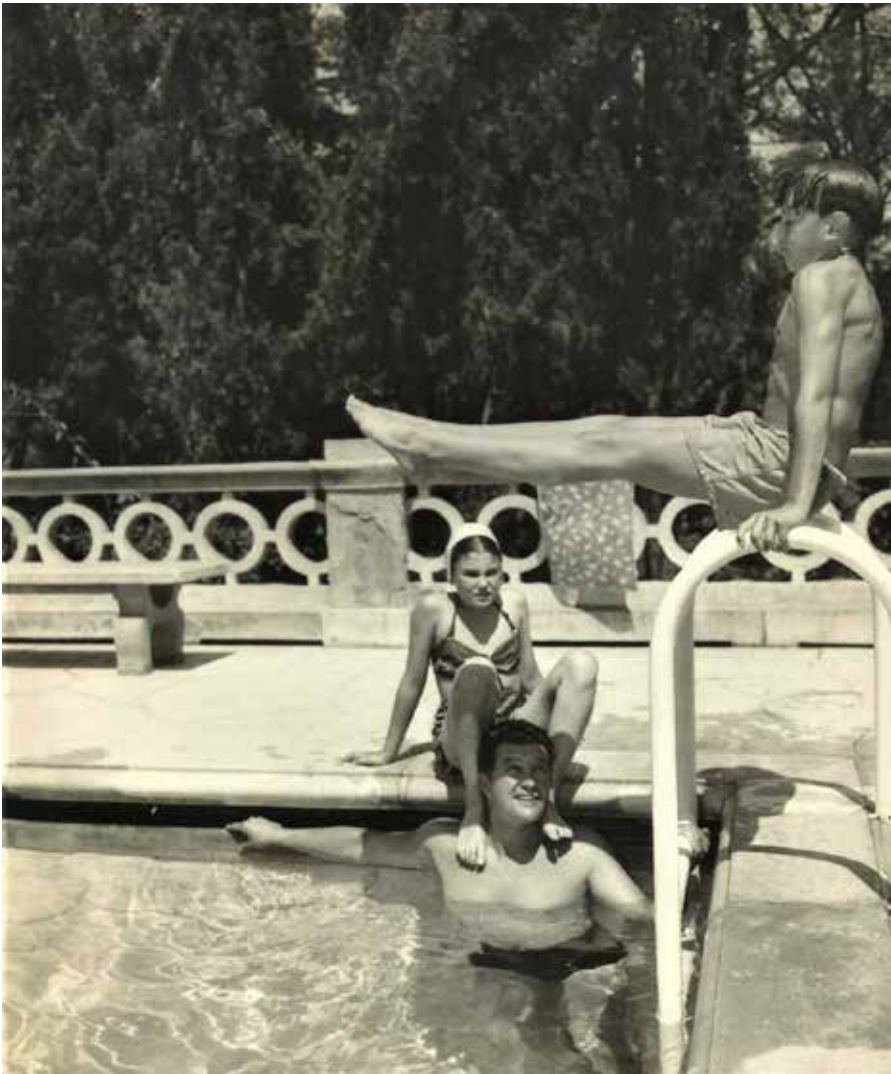
Described by architectural historians David Gebhard and Robert Winter as “a must” for those “who are enticed by the Spanish Colonial Revival of the 1920s,” the house was designed and built by Paul Revere Williams in 1927 for James Degnan, a prominent Los Angeles attorney, and his wife, Dorothy.⁴ Mr. Williams was the first Black architect to be granted membership in the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (“AIA”), in 1923, and he was the first Black architect to be elected as an AIA Fellow, in 1957.⁵ In 2016, Mr. Williams was awarded a posthumous Gold Medal, the AIA’s highest honor for architectural achievement, again the first Black architect to win this prestigious award.⁶ Remarkably, Mr. Williams created this multi-acre Mediterranean Revival masterpiece in a suburb that touted itself in the 1920s as only being open to “desirable members of the Caucasian race,” with “permanent race and building restrictions.”⁷

Several of Mr. Williams’ first residences were built in La Cañada Flintridge starting in 1922, the year he opened his independent practice.⁸ In looking at the set of original architectural plans, which we only recently discovered (to my great delight!) tucked away in a closet when I began researching for this article in earnest, what stands out to me is the simple elegance and gracious quality of his work. At the same time, he still maintained a masterful attention to detail. Even as a young architect, Paul Williams showed a rare maturity and thoughtfulness in his overall design:

The most important lesson I learned was restraint. A room should have a single focal point, regardless of how much money goes into it. If not arranged well, a magnificent collection of furnishings can look like an expensive junk shop. Restraint, then, is a matter of choosing and carefully planning for the total effect.⁹

On a daily basis, I marvel at Paul Williams’ genius and continue to discover new details in his brilliant architecture after living here for over twenty years.¹⁰

While the property is now only a fraction of its original size, there are still several dwelling structures remaining:



the three-story building referred to as the Playhouse; a quaint guest house by the pool; and the formal Mediterranean Revival main house, which was completed in or around 1929 at the cost of \$125,000.¹¹ The sellers had told us that the Playhouse was built for the original owners to live in while the main house was being built. We recently discovered through old newspaper photographs that the Playhouse was completed at least as early as 1925, several years earlier than we had previously understood.¹² It is a classic example of the California Revival style, with its “open-beamed ceilings in the great room, along with a fabulous faux-wood and river rock fireplace, and original touches.”¹³ The elegant main house is graced with large stained glass and leaded glass windows, a black and white marble-floored ballroom with cast panels of biblical scenes and an indoor fountain said to be designed by Ernest Batchelder, a grand dining room with bronze and crystal lighting and a carved

wood ceiling, and a large great room with high ceilings, stenciled beams, and finely crafted wood and iron lighting fixtures.¹⁴

The original five-acre property must have been spectacular, reported to have been graced with two hundred deodar cedars,¹⁵ an enormous, heated swimming pool, a golf driving range and putting green, and courts for playing horse-shoes, croquet, and tennis/badminton.¹⁶ Yet the Olympic-sized pool still remains, along with other artistic features, such as a beautiful alcove with a ceramic della Robbia sculpture set in a mosaic of glass with multi-colored grout, fishponds and tiled fountains and patios, concrete sculptures of majestic lions and amusing mushrooms, and wrought iron fixtures and gates.¹⁷ The second owner, the renowned and charming actor Dennis Morgan, described the menagerie of animals he kept at the property, including a flock of turkeys, wild ducks, chickens, horses, rabbits, peacocks, and dogs.¹⁸ The property is and always has been full of beauty,

delight, and abundant liveliness.

According to the local newspapers, Dorothy Degnan designed and supervised the estate’s landscaping herself.¹⁹ She was a well-known landscape painter “of considerable talent and accomplishment,”²⁰ and an entire exhibit was devoted to her work at the Los Angeles Athletic Club in 1932.²¹ Mrs. Degnan considered her garden as one of her artistic creations:

Next to her painting Mrs. Degnan likes gardening and the lovely grounds of the family estate here reveal her unusual gifts in this direction also. Rare statuary, and all sorts of unusual nooks make the Degnan garden a work of art. Mrs. Degnan believes that painting and gardening belong together.²²

One reporter described her garden as perhaps “the most elaborate and novel

Top: The Grotto brimming with ferns, bromeliads, and epiphytes. All subsequent contemporary photographs by Gina Guerra.

Middle: The Grotto pool and waterfalls.

Bottom, left: Interior of the Grotto.

Bottom, right: The prayer bench has what appears to be an umbrella hole next to it, presumably to provide shade on a hot summer day.

Opposite, top: The Tea House in the 1930s. Photo by Starrett, Los Angeles. Courtesy Degnan family archives.

Opposite, bottom: The Tea House today.



garden treatment of any of the many large homes in this area” and as “a veritable fairyland.”²³

FAUX BOIS AT THE DEGNAN ESTATE

One of the Degnan Estate’s most significant features is its unique collection of *faux bois*. *Faux bois* – or “false wood” in French – refers to the art of sculpting concrete or other media into lifelike representations of rustic wood. While the art form likely had its roots in the Renaissance, its popularity peaked in the late nineteenth century, lasting through the 1940s.²⁴

Our discovery of this *faux bois* over the years has almost been akin to an archaeological dig. Some of it was buried under heavy foliage and even partially underground, and each new finding was a sheer delight. Here are a few of the steps on our remarkable journey.





THE GROTTTO

The fabulous *faux bois* grotto is a prominent feature of the Degnan Estate, and its construction was announced in the local media with much fanfare.²⁵ Mrs. Degnan imported a replica of the famous Lady of Lourdes statue, the original of which sits in a rock cave in Lourdes, France, where an apparition of the Virgin Mary is said to have first appeared to a young fourteen-year-old girl while she was gathering firewood.²⁶ Mrs. Degnan had the grotto built specifically for this statue:

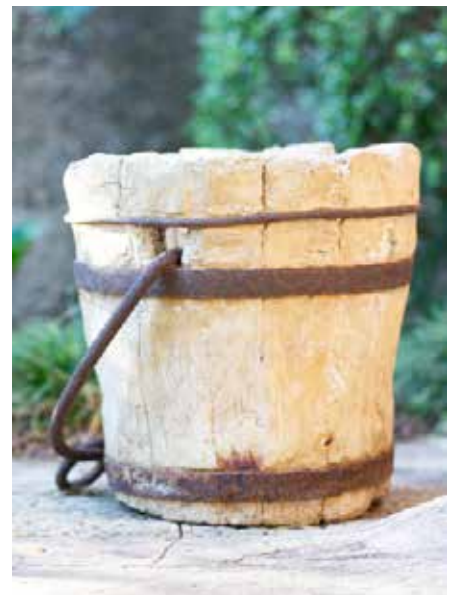
The Alta Canyada Lady of Lourdes reposes in a grotto made especially for her just as does the original. With the help of a famous architect and sculptor Mrs. Degnan has created a grotto that has every appearance of being “old.” Tree trunks made of cement are

painted in soft, dull, browns and greens to resemble the real old stumps and the Lady of Lourdes in her pure white marble dress stands there, benign and motionless, a striking figure. And just beyond over the garden wall are the tops of the nearby hills, just as the peaks of the Pyrenees mountains are visible from the great basilica which houses the original Lady of Lourdes.²⁷

While the statue of the Lady of Lourdes unfortunately no longer exists on the property, the grotto remains, and it is a work of art unto itself. Thick sculpted *faux bois* trees with niches for whimsical plantings surround the grotto area designed to house the statue, which we discovered becomes beautifully colored when wet. Our children spent many happy days spraying the grotto with the hose (before the drought!)

to see the many colors magically appear.

But the real unexpected discovery occurred one day when Rod climbed onto the grotto wall to see what was on the inside, and he noticed a water supply to the grotto. While the faucet no longer worked, we ran the hose down the back of the grotto and discovered that it is actually an elaborate system of fountains. Water seeps from the holes in the grotto and fills up the pools below, and then travels down rivulets to a secondary pond. What we thought was a large crack in the floor of the grotto caused by tree roots was actually intentional and served to help funnel the water along. We then ran water into a large faux bois log to the side of the grotto, and the water emerged like a little waterfall running down the log. The water dipped underground and resurfaced a few minutes later in a rock-like feature leading into the secondary pond. It was remarkable. We still have not figured out what happened



Opposite:

Top, left: Interior of the Tea House, with its branches, knotholes, and colored concrete.

Top, right: View of the tiger climbing down the *faux bois* branches of the Tea House.

Middle, left: Looking to the side of the Tea House, with its arched windows and large *faux bois* planter.

Middle, right: An elephant traverses a *faux bois* branch along the ceiling of the Tea House.

Bottom, left: The *faux bois* desertscape on top of the Tea House, with the blue glass "river."

Bottom, right: The finely-crafted *faux bois* bucket at the Tea House.

This page:

Top: The screened-in BBQ area at the eastern edge of the property, which was lost in the subdivision. 1930s photo by Avondé, Beverly Hills. Courtesy Degnan family archives.

Bottom: A bridge over the stream near the BBQ area. 1930s photo courtesy Degnan family archives.



to the water once it reached the secondary pond. There is no opening in the pond, and no evidence of a pump or drain to allow recirculation of the water. It is on our bucket list of things to figure out!

THE TEA HOUSE

Another significant *faux bois* feature on the property is what is referred to as the Tea House. The Tea House was constructed when the main house was being built and was reportedly created by a Japanese artisan brought in to craft the whimsical structure.²⁸ The Tea House is supported by *faux bois* trees, with an Asian-styled roofline of concrete-crafted limbs. In the center of the structure is an inlaid *faux bois* table, with a chessboard, glass flow-

ers, and other decorative elements. There are intricate details in the Tea House that are amazing, such as knotholes and nail holes that are carved into the colored concrete wooden slats. Red-tiled cabinet doors complement the red-dyed concrete, and the ceiling is made to look like a cave with natural-looking, colored stalactites hanging down. We discovered that there are also hidden animals in the structure: a small red bird perched on a branch; an elephant walking along a high limb; and a white tiger climbing down the side of the house. The imagination and craftsmanship are truly incredible.

One day while we were working in the garden, several years after we had moved in, I decided that I wanted to move an old bucket that had been sitting outside the

Tea House. I went to pick it up and discovered that it too was made of concrete and was so heavy that I could not even lift it. It was so realistic! It was hard to believe that we had lived here for years, and I never noticed that it was not a real wooden bucket.

THE FAUX BOIS CACTI

When we moved into the house, the top of the Tea House was covered with large jade plants (*Crassula ovata*). We were concerned that the jade plants were getting too heavy for the Tea House and that they might damage the structure, so Rod set about removing some of the larger plants. I soon heard him calling my name, so I ran over. There were *faux bois* cacti hidden



Above: The glass-eyed orb.



Right, top: The table and chairs along the side of the pool in the 1930s. Courtesy Degnan family archives.



Right, bottom: The table and chairs today.

Opposite, top: The lion fountain with the foothills in the background. 1930s photo courtesy Degnan family archives.

Opposite, bottom: A gnome fishing off the fallen log bridge.

underneath and behind the jade plants. There was, in fact, an entire desertscape! A small riverbed lined with rocks ran through the desert garden, which we filled with blue sea glass to create the illusion of water. Along the riverbed were *faux bois* cacti, something we had never seen before. We had no idea this little treasure existed when we bought the house.

THE BARBEQUE

One *faux bois* feature that no longer exists is the old barbeque, variously referred to as the “summer kitchen,” the “lanai with BBQ,” and (my favorite) the “amusement grill.”²⁹ One day, several years after we had purchased the house, our daughter came running in and told us that some

people were walking around in the yard. By the time Rod went outside, they were gone, but then the doorbell rang. At the door were people who told us that they were relatives of the Degnans. They knew enough about the property that we believed them and ended up showing them around the grounds for an hour. At the end, they asked if they could come back with some relatives, as the house was an important part of their family history and they spoke about it often. They were lovely people, and we agreed.

On the date appointed, close to 20 people showed up for the tour. It was a wonderful afternoon, and we learned a great deal about the house and its history. They offered to let us copy some pictures of the house taken in the 1930s that had



been in a relative's basement for all these years. Among the photos were those taken of a barbecue area that used to exist at the end of the block. The structure was made of river rock walls screened in by *faux bois* branches and covered by a log roof. A small stream ran alongside the barbecue, with a wooden hand-railed bridge, a concrete Japanese lantern, and strings of lights hung overhead. It must have been magical at night when it was all lit up, with the stars above and in the shadows of the mountains of the Angeles National Forest. It conjures up images of how Dennis Morgan described his home to a journalist:

"Since we moved up there, I've discovered again that there are such things as dawn and twilight

and stars," Dennis said in a gratified voice. (When you look at the sky in town, the reflection of the gaudy neons makes you think of the Chicago fire.) "And what a climate," he continued. "You sleep like a bum under a haystack."³⁰

These are some of my favorite pictures of the Degnan property. I always like to think that we all created a bit of good karma in the world that day.

THE ORB

Oh, the mystery of the orb. What is it? We still don't know. It is a round-shaped concrete ball with what looks like a glass eye of some sort. We climbed up onto the

structure to see if there was any electrical wiring or even a candle holder to determine if it was some sort of lighting fixture, but we did not see anything. Based upon old photos of the property and what relatives of the prior owners have told us, we believe that this structure was part of an original gate leading to the main driveway of the property. The mystery continues....

THE TABLE AND CHAIRS

When we first moved to the property, there was quite a bit of cleanup work in the main house, and we did not get to the outlying structures for some time. So we did not really notice a set of *faux bois* table and chairs that was sticking partially out of the ground along the side of the pool,



Top, left: The restored river rock and *faux bois* fireplace.

Top, right: The wood and wrought iron gate to the back driveway, flanked by *faux bois* light fixtures.

Bottom, left: Cast bas-relief panels depict various biblical scenes.

Bottom, right: The Japanese garden bridge.

Opposite, left: This beautiful bas-relief concrete sculpture, dated 1928, has what appears to be a unique signature in the upper right-hand corner.

Opposite, right: The ship relief with the Virgin of Guadalupe on the sail.

like archeological relics. (It made me think of the famous scene from the Planet of the Apes.) We finally realized what it was, and it took an entire crew of men to dig up the table and chairs and move them to a more prominent place in the garden. They are now outside of our dining room window, mirroring the table and chairs inside the house. Interestingly, when we looked at the old pictures of the house that we received from the Degnan relatives, the table and chairs set was found in the exact place that it had originally been during the 1930s, when the property was much larger.

THE FALLEN LOG BRIDGE

Another feature that we had no idea existed when we bought the house was the pond behind the pool with the fallen log *faux bois* bridge. When we moved into the house, the area behind the pool was completely covered with several feet of ivy. We finally got around to cleaning out the ivy one afternoon and discovered that there was a pond with a concrete lily pad bottom, a concrete fallen log bridge, and *faux bois* planters along the side of it. At some point, we left to take a break, and when

Rod returned, our next-door neighbor was taking a video of the pond. He said he had lived there for many years, and he had never seen the pond before.

As it turned out, we learned several years later that the pond behind the pool was connected to two lion-head fountains next to the pool. We had suspected for some time that the lion heads might be fountains, and after some heavy lifting, we discovered a water source under the concrete slabs next to the fountains. We turned on the water and, sure enough, water began to flow from the lions' mouths. What was unexpected, though, was that a half an hour later the water from the fountains began to drain into the pond some 100 feet away from the fountains below the pool. There were remnants of an old pump house next to the pond, so there may have been a circulating mechanism originally. It is just another example of the intricacies of the landscaping designed by Mrs. Degnan.

THE PLAYHOUSE FIREPLACE

The Playhouse is a three-story structure built on the property before the construc-



tion of the main house. When we bought the property, the prior owners were growing orchids in the Playhouse, and had the orchids set out on the wood floors of the house (where they were being watered as well!). Needless to say, the Playhouse was in pretty dire shape, and several people suggested to us that we should just tear it down. But it is a wonderful building, with a large open-beam ceiling and a vintage bar in the great room.³¹ There is also a grand fireplace in the great room, with a *faux bois* mantel and river rock surround that sadly had all been painted white by prior owners. It took several workers many weeks of dedicated work to remove the white paint from the *faux bois* and the river rock, and they sometimes had to resort to using toothbrushes to scrape out all of the remnants of the paint. The result, though, was gorgeous.

As part of our restoration of the Playhouse, we had to replaster the damaged walls on the top two floors. During the demolition, we discovered that the building was a giant beehive! There must have been tens of thousands of dead bees that spilled out of the walls, along with an intricate web of desiccated honeycomb.

For many years after we cleaned out the beehive, the bees would return to the Playhouse and attempt to burrow into the walls to get to the old hive.

Indeed, the return of nature is a recurring theme with the Playhouse. Every year, we noticed that mourning doves would come and build a nest in the flowerpots on the balcony of the Playhouse. After several years of living at the property, the relatives of the Morner family – the second owners of the estate (Stanley Morner is the actual name of the actor Dennis Morgan) – reached out to us and sent us some vintage pictures of the property. One of the pictures was of mourning doves in their nest in a flowerpot on the balcony of the Playhouse. So, for seventy years, generations of these doves have been returning to this spot to give birth to their babies. When our girls were little, they would sit quietly on the second floor of the Playhouse, watching the birds guard their eggs and then witnessing the baby birds' births and growth. It still makes me smile thinking about it.

OTHER CONCRETE AND UNIQUE ARTWORK AT THE DEGNAN ESTATE

In addition to the *faux bois*, there are concrete and other beautiful works of art on the Degnan property. For example, affixed to the side of the guest house is a lovely depiction of the Virgin Mary in cast concrete, and there are plaster bas relief panels of various scenes from the Bible in the ballroom. These works are stamped with what possibly are initials or a temple or even a ziggurat, likely the signature of the artist who remains unknown.

There is also a plaster bas relief panel of a ship at the end of the loggia outside. We hardly noticed it when we moved in as it was painted the same color as the outside wall. When we finally realized what it was, we brought in an artist to paint the ship panel to look like a tile. When the artist was up on the ladder painting, we heard him call out to us: he had discovered the Virgin of Guadalupe on the sail of the ship, a detail so intricate we could hardly believe it.

Other garden follies include a glass mosaic inlaid throne, a Japanese bridge,



Top, left: The glass-inlaid throne.

Top, right: The baptismal font in the garden adjacent to the Grotto.

Opposite: Mushrooms and their babies.



a troop of mushrooms (with babies), a prayer bench, and a baptismal font – all made of concrete.

Two brilliant and talented minds united to create a unique estate, a work of art, nestled in the foothills of the Angeles National Forest. As one author so beautifully wrote about the Degnan property:

Is that what a home in a California canyon should be? The visitor passes the doors of Spain, through the loggias of Italy, under ceilings decorated as if for a banquet hall in Mexico City, across a floor in black-and-white domino as if this were Venice, past geometric tile work from North Africa, and into the light and air of an early California evening. Having crossed so many boundaries of time and space, the house may seem slightly unreal as a consequence.³²

We have been honored to be the caretakers of this wonderful treasure.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Gina Guerra did her undergraduate studies at UC San Diego, receiving a B.A. in History with a minor in Latin Literature. She earned a J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law, and practiced law as a civil litigation attorney for twenty years before retiring to focus on raising her three children. A CGLHS member, she spends most of her free time in the garden and is an active member of the Pasadena Garden Club. She also enjoys reading and doing needlepoint.



Endnotes

¹Rod was referring to the iconic book that we had repeatedly turned to for inspiration for our Santa Monica home. McMillian, Elizabeth. 1996. *Casa California: Spanish-Style Houses from Santa Barbara to San Clemente*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. (see pp. 172-81).

²McMillian, Elizabeth. 2002. *California Colonial: The Spanish and Rancho Revival Styles*. Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd. (pp. 43 & 114); Hudson, Karen E. 2012. *Paul R. Williams: Classic Hollywood Style*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. (p. 57).

³See Herold, Ann. "Peace Keepers." *Los Angeles Magazine*. April 2016.

⁴Gebhard, David and Winter, Robert. 1994. *Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide*. Utah: Gibbs Smith, Publisher (pp. 362-63); See Coates, Carole and Dietz, Annie. 2007. *California Revival: Vintage Decor for Today's Homes*. Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd. (p. 33).

⁵Hudson, Karen E. 1993. *Paul R. Williams, Architect: A Legacy of Style*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. (p. 19).

⁶Kilston, Lyra. 2017. "Little-Known Stories: Map Showcases More Than 50 Landmarks By African-American Architects." KCET.org, Jan. 11, 2017. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/new-map-highlights-buildings-by-african-american-architects-in-los-angeles-aia-paul-r>; Hawthorne, Christopher. 2017. "Honor Is A Long Time In Coming." *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 28, 2017. <https://latimes.newspapers.com/image/298884411/?terms=Paul%2BR%2BWilliams>.

⁷"Beauty Undefined: Alta Canyada Suburban Estates" (brochure).

⁸Hudson, Karen E. 1994. *The Will and the Way: Paul R. Williams, Architect*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. (p. 18); *A Legacy of Style*, p. 21; *Classic Hollywood Style*, p. 10.

⁹*The Will and the Way* (p. 14); see also Goodyear, Dana. "Hotel California." *The New Yorker*. Feb. 7, 2005 ("Williams understood his clients' wish for grandeur but tempered it with a measure of restraint.").

¹⁰Paul Williams' important body of work in Los Angeles is now receiving its much-deserved recognition. See "The City In His Hands." *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 17, 2021; see also Ireland, Janna. 2020. *Regarding Paul R. Williams: A Photographer's View*. Los Angeles: Angel City Press. Recently, the Getty Research Institute, jointly with the University of Southern California, acquired the Paul Williams' archive, touting it as "the most significant and intact of any African American architect working in Southern California in the early and mid-20th century." "Archive of Architect Paul Revere Williams Jointly Acquired by USC and Getty." June 30, 2020. <https://www.getty.edu/news/architect-paul-revere-williams-archive-acquired-usc-getty/>.

¹¹This was a very large sum of money at the time, equivalent to about \$1.8 million today. "Alta Canyada Activity Grows." *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 14, 1929. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/385394769/#>; When the Degnan Estate was sold in 1938, the reported original cost was \$250,000. "To Close Estate," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 13, 1938. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/380820673>.

¹²"Thousands of Beautiful Trees Provide Picturesque Setting for Residential Development in Alta-Canyada District." *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1925. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/380498490>; "Plan Sunday Afternoon Drive Through the Beautiful Home Estates of Alta Canyada." *Pasadena Evening Post*, Mar. 21, 1925. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/622059637>.

¹³*California Revival*, p. 33.

¹⁴See, e.g., *Casa California*, pp. 174-75, 180; *California Revival*, p. 40; *Classic Hollywood Style*, pp. 50, 56-57.

¹⁵The deodars were planted in 1913 by Edwin T. Earl, who had purchased the area in 1910, subdivided it, and "added the 'y' to Canada, Americanizing the pronunciation." "Giant Deodars, Planted in 1913, Lend Majesty to Section in La Canada." *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 2, 1956. <https://www.latimes.newspapers.com/image/162188132>.

¹⁶Bowers, Lynn. 1946. "Outdoor Guy." *Movie Show*, June 1946. <https://dennismorgan.wordpress.com/publications/outdoor-guy/>.

¹⁷See, e.g., *California Revival*, pp. 8-9, 13, 203; *California Colonial*, p. 86; *Casa California*, pp. 176-77.

¹⁸See "Outdoor Guy." Interestingly, the Morgans' dining room furniture has been passed down with the house since the 1940s. "It's a hand-carved 19th Century Italian set with a huge table, twelve chairs and several big sideboards for large quantities of silver and china which we don't have. It was on display at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893." How he came to acquire it is interesting. Charles Arnt, a character-actor neighbor of Dennis', inherited it from his father and sold it to the Morgans because their dining room is the only place he'd ever seen that is big enough to display the beautiful and valuable pieces properly. Part of the bargain is that Dennis will invite Mr. Arnt's father over for dinner when he comes to California for a visit." *Id*.

¹⁹"Woman Owner of Estate Does Her Own Landscaping with Artistic Result in Beautiful La Canada Area." *Pasadena Post*, Jul. 31, 1932. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/622193486>; see also "La Canada Notes." *Pasadena Post*, Dec. 19, 1931. ("Mrs. James Degnan, wealthy Alta Canyada resident, took a course in fine arts in order to supervise the landscaping and decoration of the beautiful Degnan home and estate.").

²⁰"Replica of Famous Statue Is Imported." *Pasadena Post*, Jul. 31, 1932. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/622193486>.

²¹"Mrs. Degnan Now Exhibiting Work: California Landscapes Featured at Athletic Club Display." *Pasadena Post*, May

26, 1932. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/622191910>.

²²"Mrs. Degnan Now Exhibiting Work."

²³"Replica of Famous Statue."

²⁴There are important examples of *faux bois* remaining in the Pasadena area today. Busch Gardens, an attraction that was built by Adolphus Busch of Anheuser-Busch brewing fame, was a popular Pasadena destination. See Hemmerlein, Sandi. "Top Ten Places to Trace the Remains of Pasadena's Busch Gardens." KCET, Jan. 8, 2018. <https://www.kcet.org/social-wanderer/top-ten-places-to-trace-the-remains-of-pasadenas-busch-gardens>. Opened in 1906 and operating into the 1930s, it had *faux bois* decorative elements throughout the gardens, some of which are extant today. "Pasadena's Busch Gardens"; Atlas Obscura <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/pasadena-s-busch-gardens>. The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens has a lovely collection, including arbors that support the wisteria in the Japanese Garden and the recently restored structure in the Rose Garden, which consists of 100 "trees" plus the connecting beams and handrails. See <https://www.huntington.org>.

²⁵"Mrs. James Degnan of Alta Canyada has completed an attractive grotto on the Degnan estate and will install soon a beautiful marble statue, which it is reported has recently arrived from Italy." "La Canada Notes: Builds Grotto." *Pasadena Post*, Jul. 21, 1931. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/622351951>; see also "Woman Owner of Estate."

²⁶"Our Lady of Lourdes," Wikipedia, last modified on Oct. 13, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Lourdes.

²⁷"Replica of Famous Statue"; see also "Woman Owner of Estate" (photo of replica statue). There is another shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes nearby in Altadena at St. Elizabeth Church. The grotto, created by Ryozo Fuso Kado and dedicated in 1939, "contains a walk-in pool, and the peaceful sound of running water, all behind the original cement railings crafted to look like hewn logs." "Lourdes of the West": the history of the St. Elizabeth grotto." *altadenablog* Apr. 21, 2011. <https://altadenablog.altadenahistoricalociety.org/archive/www.altadenablog.com/2011/04/lourdes-of-the-west-the-history-of-the-st-elizabeth-grotto.html>.

²⁸Cormaci, Carol. 1998. "On The Homefront." *La Canada Valley Sun*, May 14, 1998; see also "Alta Canyada Activity Grows" (construction photo in 1929).

²⁹"Live in the Best." *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 22, 1951. <http://latimes.newspapers.com/image/160696421>; "Alta Canyada's Finest Estate." *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1957. <http://latimes.newspapers.com/image/162060897>; "Estate of Dorothy Degnan." *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 1941. <http://latimes.newspapers.com/image/160241789>.

³⁰"Outdoor Guy."

³¹See *California Revival* at pp. 33-44 for some beautiful photos of the Playhouse.

³²Keaton, Diane and Waldie, D.J. 2007. *California Romantica*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. (p. 112).

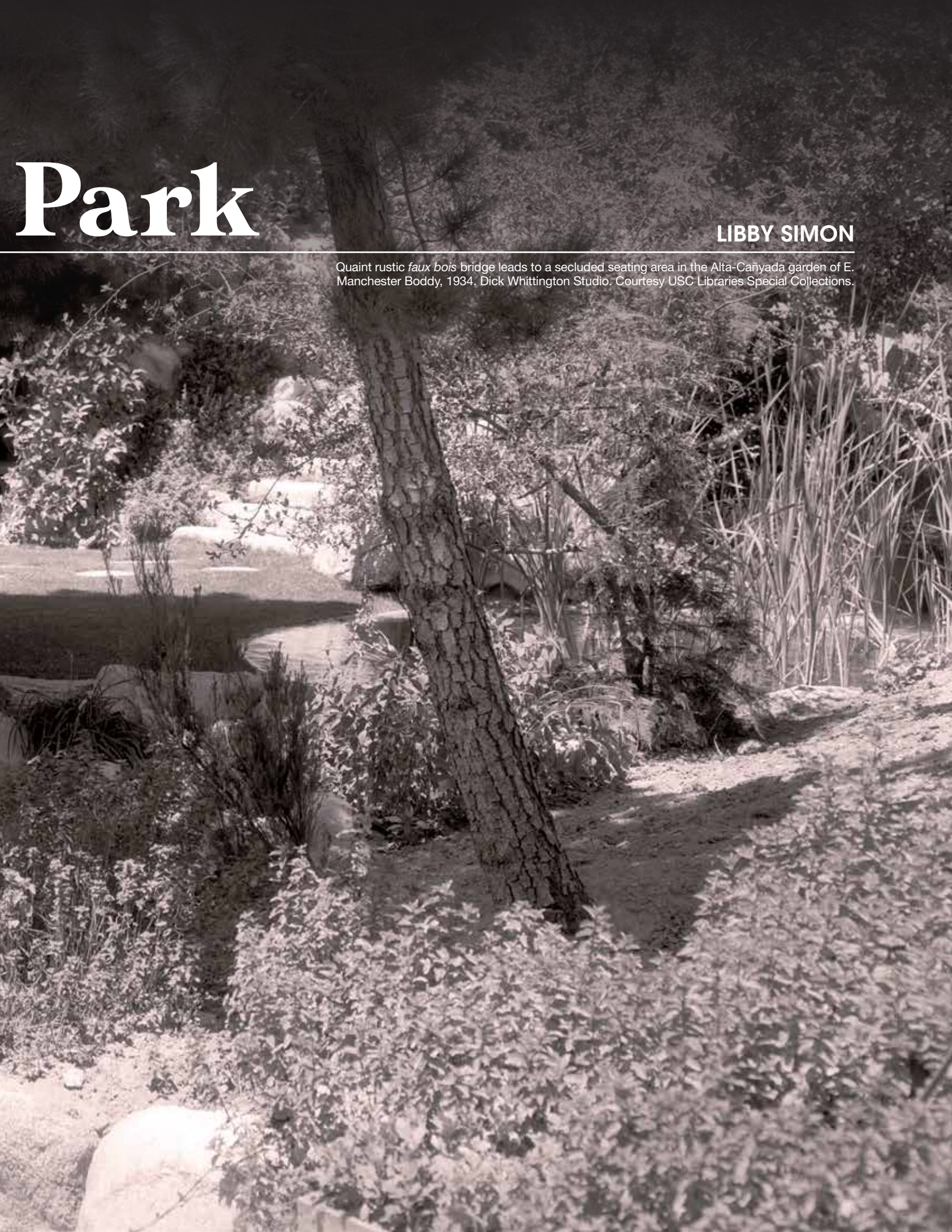
Alta-Cañyada: Living in a Great



Park

LIBBY SIMON

Quaint rustic *faux bois* bridge leads to a secluded seating area in the Alta-Cañyada garden of E. Manchester Boddy, 1934. Dick Whittington Studio. Courtesy USC Libraries Special Collections.





Above: Postcard view looking northwest from San Rafael Hills towards Mt. Lukens. Circa 1915. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives. (Landscape 5-G).

Opposite: The Old Spanish and Mexican Ranchos of Los Angeles County. Title Insurance and Trust Company, 1937. Gerald A. Eddy, artist. Courtesy Library of Congress.

In a verdant and little-known Southern California mountain valley is the 1920s development of Alta-Cañada. It's now within the city of La Cañada Flintridge, but at the time, it was in La Cañada. (The spelling will be explained). Located about fourteen miles due north of downtown Los Angeles and about 7 miles from Pasadena, it lies at the base of the rugged San Gabriel Mountains, with the green Verdugo Mountains at the southeast and the San Rafael Hills to the west. La Cañada Flintridge is known as the gateway to the Angeles Forest and the home of Descanso Gardens and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

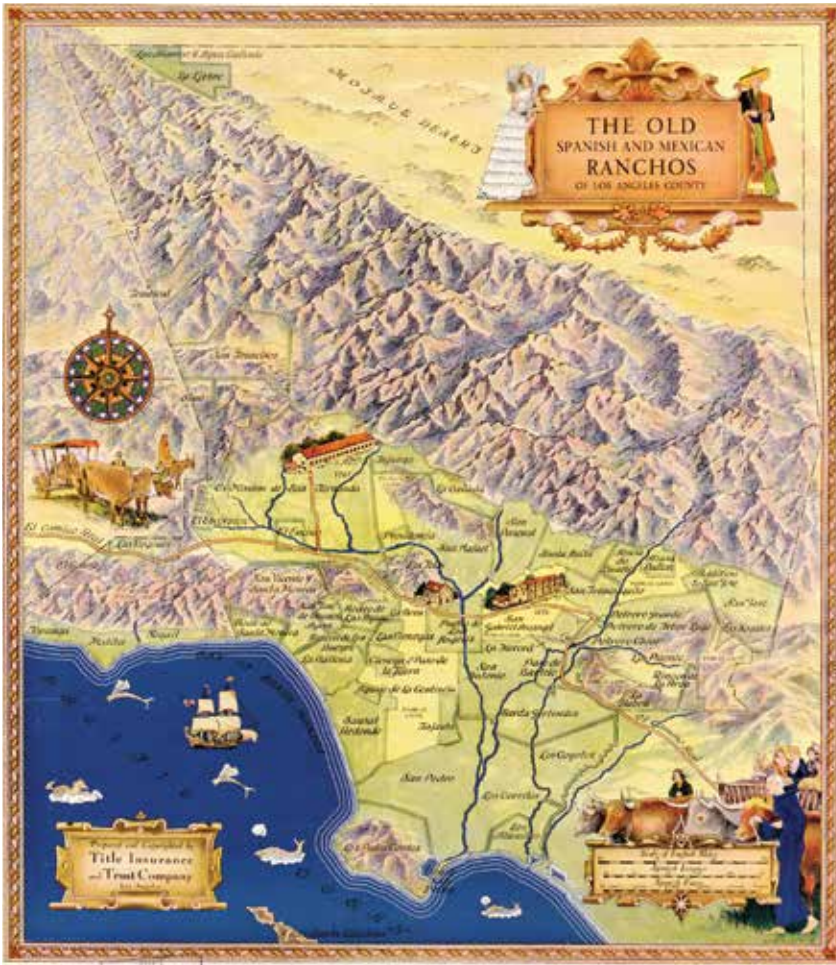
The area was home to the Hahamog'na (people of the fruitful valley and land of flowing water), a tribe of the Tongva people, their name Anglicized today as the Hahamongna. With the many sources of year-round water flowing from the mountain canyons, the Hahamongna people thrived for generations in this valley.¹

Gaspar de Portolá's expedition of 1769 through Alta California led to the establishment of the Franciscan missions. During this time, the Hahamongna people were forced to live and work at the San

Fernando and San Gabriel Missions. In 1784, an officer on the expedition, Corporal Jose Maria Verdugo, was granted permission to graze his cattle on the land between the two missions, which was later to be called Rancho San Rafael. The more than 36,000-acre expanse of land became what is now Glendale, Highland Park, Eagle Rock, and most of Burbank.²

In 1798, Jose Maria Verdugo received the confirmation of his Rancho San Rafael being granted to him. At his death in 1831, he bequeathed one half of the rancho to his son Julio and the other half to his daughter, Catalina. The northern portion was primarily mountainous with an abundance of canyons and streams, wild willow, sycamore, and oaks. The Verdugo family planted wheat, grapes, and orchards of fig, peach, apple, orange, lime, and lemon trees.³

Mexico's independence from Spain in 1822 brought a change in the distribution and boundaries of the land, and Julio and Catalina had to prove that the land was theirs. Burdened with taxes, legal expenses, and foreclosures on loans, they began to sell portions of the land.



As some of the Verdugo land remained neglected, a portion was granted in 1843 to Ygnacio Coronel, a Mexican school teacher at the presidio of Los Angeles by Governor Manuel Micheltonera. It was Coronel who called the area La Cañada Atras de Rancho Los Verdugos, meaning “the canyon behind the Verdugo Ranch.”⁴ In 1852 Coronel sold the property to law partners and early pioneers Jonathan R. Scott and Benjamin Hayes, both from Missouri. Scott eventually bought out his partner Hayes and then traded the Rancho San Rafael section of the property back to Julio and Catalina Verdugo in 1857, in exchange for what is now Burbank.

Many former Civil War veterans, troubled with lung problems and threatened by tuberculosis, came west in search of health remedies, and began to settle in this area of fresh mountain air and fertile soil. Colonel Theodor Pickens was believed to be the first American pioneer to build and live in the area in 1871. Colonel Pickens homesteaded in the foothills just north of Rancho La Cañada in what is now called Pickens Canyon. Owning the water rights to the canyon gave him control of the entire area’s water supply.

In 1875 Rancho La Cañada was sold to fellow health-seekers Jacob Lanterman, a dentist, and Colonel Adolphus Williams, a Civil War veteran, both from Michigan.⁵ Another Civil War veteran and adventurer, Colonel Thomas Spencer Hall, homesteaded 1,000 acres of Rancho La Cañada land in 1874. He is the first person to call the area “Alta Canyonada” and to use this spelling, adding the “y.” The Hall family lived in the central city of Los Angeles, while the Colonel worked on the property on weekends and in his spare time.⁶ The whole family moved full-time to the property in 1889. His death in 1898 split the ownership of the ranch to his two sons, Tom and Samuel. The Hall family kept the eastern half of the property, including the Hall-Beckley Canyon and a large tract of the foothills.

Edwin Tobias Earl, widely known in Los Angeles as a land developer, newspaper publisher, and entrepreneur, was the first person to purchase land expressly to develop into large estates. His family were fruit farmers north of the Sacramento area. At the age of eighteen, Edwin invented the refrigerated train car to ship fruit across

the country. Eventually, this gave California fruit growers a considerable boost in sales as they could ship more fruit nationwide. By 1890 Earl had relocated to Los Angeles, owning the patent for the refrigerated train car. The family sold their business to Arbor & Company of Chicago in 1900, and Earl became a multi-millionaire at the age of forty-two. He purchased the *Los Angeles Express* newspaper in 1901, and in 1911 Earl bought the *Los Angeles Tribune*.⁷ Newspapers reported in 1903 that Earl was part of a syndicate of wealthy businessmen, property owners, and newspapermen who formed The Mission Land Company. One of their first purchases was Porter Ranch.⁸ It is claimed that he owned stock in the Owens River Aqueduct project.⁹ The first Edwin Earl family home was a magnificent and much-publicized mansion on Wilshire Boulevard in the MacArthur Park district.

As early as 1910, Earl started buying acreage north of the Hall Ranch in the Crescenta Valley and a couple of years later he purchased the Hall Ranch land that adjoined the property he already owned.¹⁰ His vision was to build a “swank”

development for his close, wealthy friends, the younger Tom Hall writes in his bio in the *Ledger*.¹¹ Earl, then in his early fifties, was looking for a site to build a “country home” in the fresh air of the foothills and with an ocean view. Being familiar with the San Fernando Valley through his investments in Porter Ranch and the Aqueduct, he found the land idyllic. After his 1915 purchase of the old Hall Ranch, Earl named his development “Alta-Cañyada,” altering the spelling yet again to give it a more exotic-sounding name and in keeping with the romance of Spain, which was the trend.

He chose the area because of the green rolling hills, the climate, and healthy air, and for the views of the Pacific Ocean, Catalina Island, and San Pedro.¹² By auto, the drive was only thirty-five minutes from downtown Los Angeles. Within four years, broad curving streets were laid out to follow the “natural contours” of the hills. He named streets after family

members and himself – Earl Canyon Mountainway, Earl Drive, Earlmont Avenue, and Jarvis Avenue. Dreaming of his closest friends joining him, he spent over \$300,000 bringing in utilities, water, lights, and landscaping.¹³ It was said at the time that he “enthusiastically set up a notable program of adding to the natural magnificence of the great estate he had purchased.”¹⁴

Edwin T. Earl hired the Howard & Smith Company (a nursery owned by Fred Howard and William R. Smith) to design the street layouts and the overall landscaping.¹⁵ The *Los Angeles Evening Express* stated that, “he engaged the most skillful landscape architects in the state to further enhance its natural beauty.”¹⁶ Under the supervision of Howard & Smith, with Fred’s brothers Paul and O.W. Howard as the landscape architects, thousands of plants were brought in. Deodar cedars (*Cedrus deodara*) arrived in 5-gallon metal pots in 1913.¹⁷ Now almost

Below: The ranch house of Colonel Thomas Spencer Hall, built ca. 1876. Photograph by Charles Pate, image the property of the La Cañada Congregational Church. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives.

Opposite, top: View of La Cañada Valley, ca. 1900. Photograph by Charles Pate, image the property of the La Cañada Congregational Church, courtesy Lanterman House Archives. (Pate 211).

Opposite, bottom: Cartoon of Edwin Tobias Earl. *Los Angeles Graphic*. December 9, 1905.



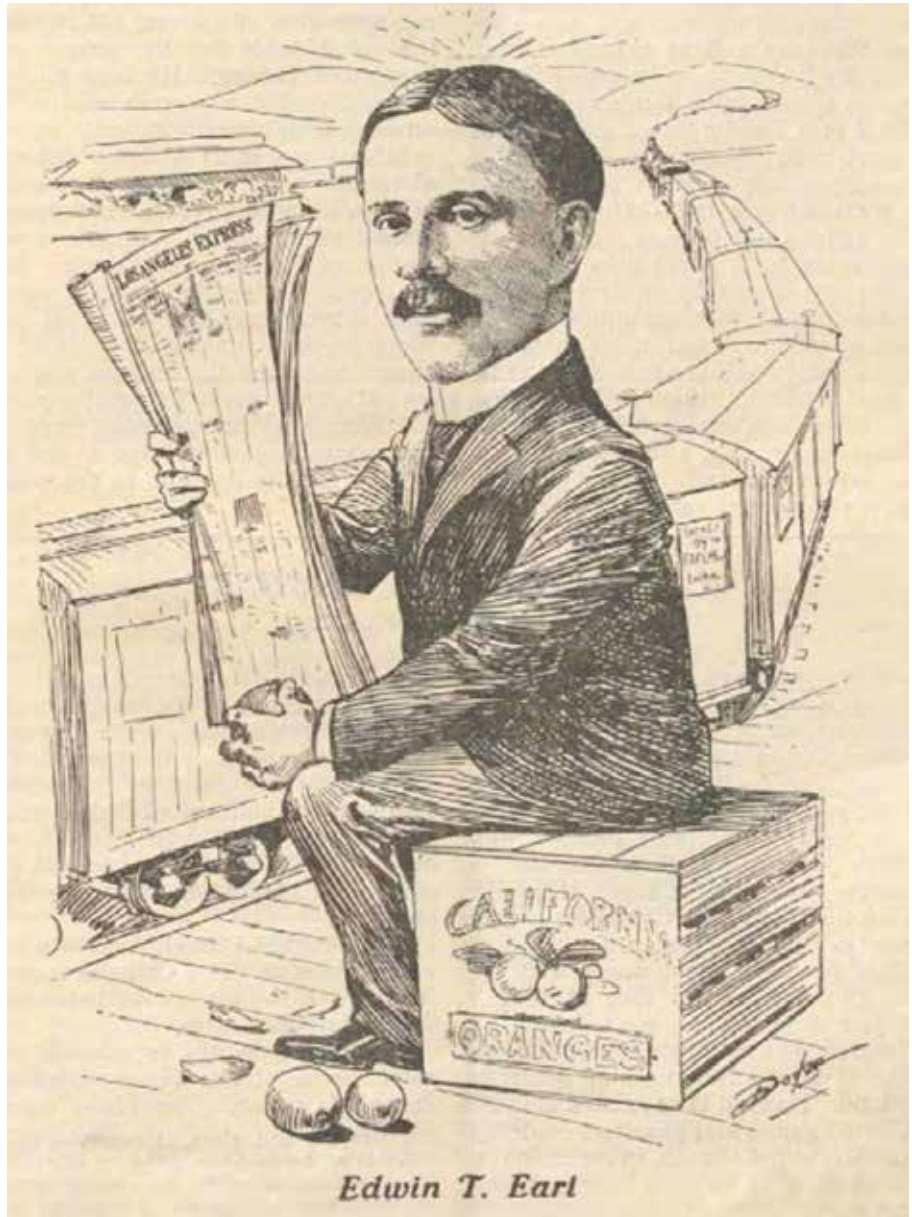
100 years old, these majestic trees tower over many of the streets of Alta Cañada (the street and area are now known and spelled in this manner) and are protected by a tree ordinance. In fact, the area is designated as the “Historic Deodar District.”¹⁸ Each estate was its own private park of one to five acres. An abundant supply of mountain stream water was available and supplied to homes and gardens. “Water comes through a system of tunnels, pipelines, and reservoirs bringing mountain water in abundance.”¹⁹ See Bob Moses’ extensive article, in this issue, describing the elaborate water and reservoir system.

After Edwin T. Earl died of heart disease in 1919 at the early age of sixty, the family sold the remaining parcels to a group of developers – Dillon, Patterson & Downs. There were 100 estates and homesites left to be sold on 640 acres in various sizes from one to five acres.²⁰ Lots were priced from \$2,600 and up for a 100-foot-wide frontage. Some lots were as large as four or five ordinary homesites.²¹

Because of Edwin Earl’s early popularity in the city, the developers used his name to sell and advertise the properties. Between 1922 and 1926, these articles and advertisements contained verbally colorful proclamations: “exclusive, elaborate estates, beautiful drives bordered by splendid pines,” “words fail to describe,” “commanding scenic position,” “natural beauties preserved in their original state.”²² These were published in newspapers run by men who would call this exclusive development home.

The ads touted the 340-acre Hall Beckley Canyon as a place with “50 waterfalls, wild deer and trout-filled streams” that would not be sold but would be retained as a private park and playground for those who purchase Alta-Cañada estates.²³ A gorge of two and one-half miles in length had bridle paths and wild deer and other game.²⁴ “Majestic eye-sweep westward, to the sea; the smiling serenity of the embracing hills.” “The mystic charm of the peace-saturated canyon...” “Breathe deeply of the pine-balm laden ozone, 2000 feet above the sea. Explore the entrancing canyon. Note the COMPLETE-NESS of everything and the MATURITY of the thousands of trees and shrubs. Take your lunch and spend the day.”²⁵ “Redolent of the balsam of the pines in the hills and canyons that form part of this glorious estate.” “Where fog is practically unknown. Fishing, hunting, riding, right inside your own domain, bridle paths through the wooded gorge.”²⁶

A variety of crops were grown on the

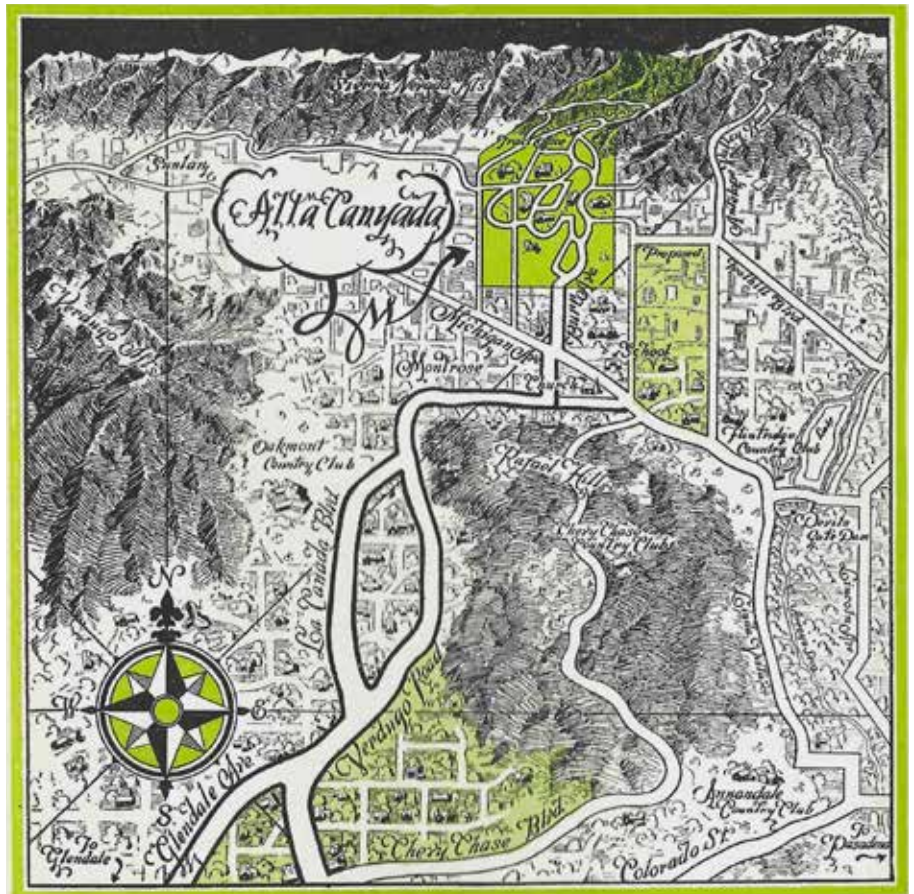




Above: "Fern Cascades, Earl's Canyon, La Canada Valley, Cal." Bradford D. Jackson postcard, ca. 1910. Courtesy California State Library.



Above, right: Aerial photograph of Alta-Cañyada, 1928. Few homes have been built in this early aerial photograph, but the deodar cedars planted by landscape architects Howard & Smith Company can be seen lining the curvilinear streets. Flight C_300, Frame K-220, January 1, 1928. Courtesy UCSB Library Geospatial Collection.



Bottom: Map of the Alta-Cañyada development from an early brochure. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives (Box 1-F11).

Opposite, top, left: Site map from an early Alta-Cañyada Estates brochure. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives (Box 1-F11).

Opposite, top, right: "What a Setting For a Home! The Story of Alta Cañyada," an early brochure. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives (Box 1-F11).

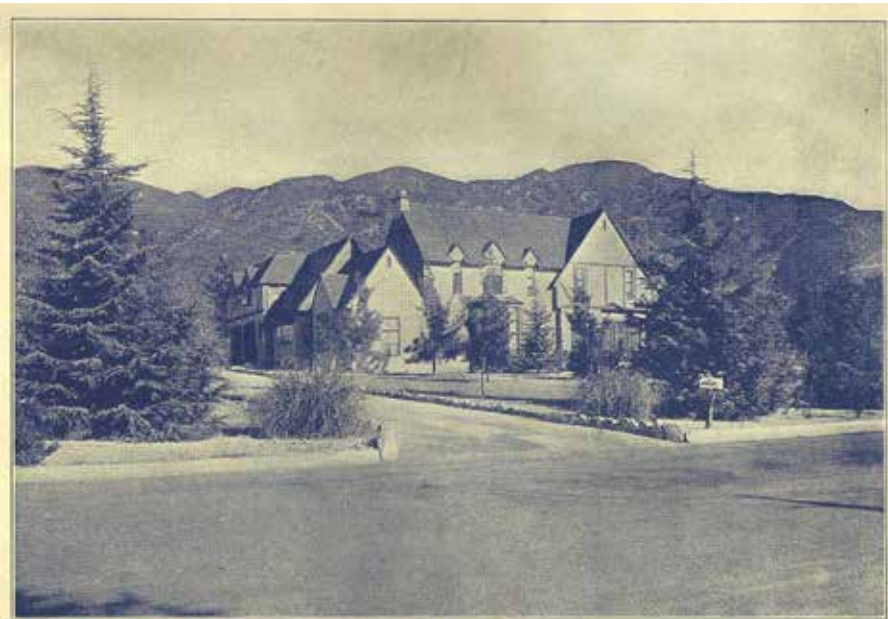
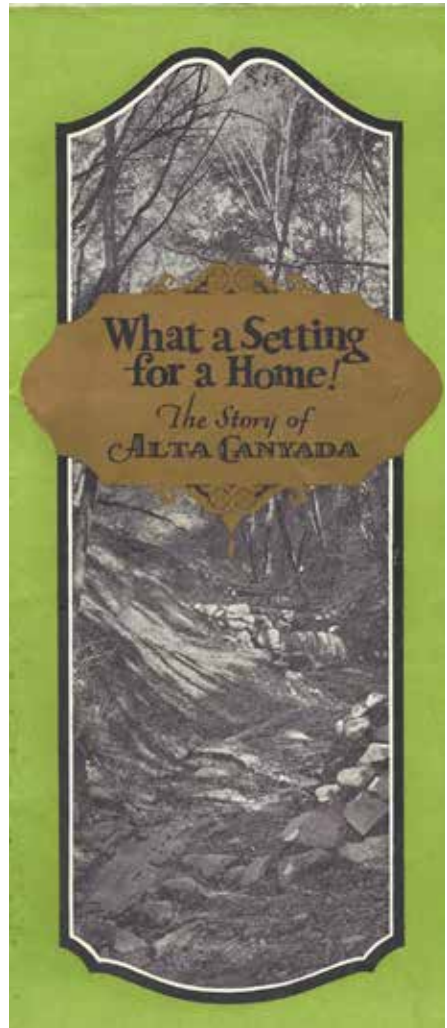
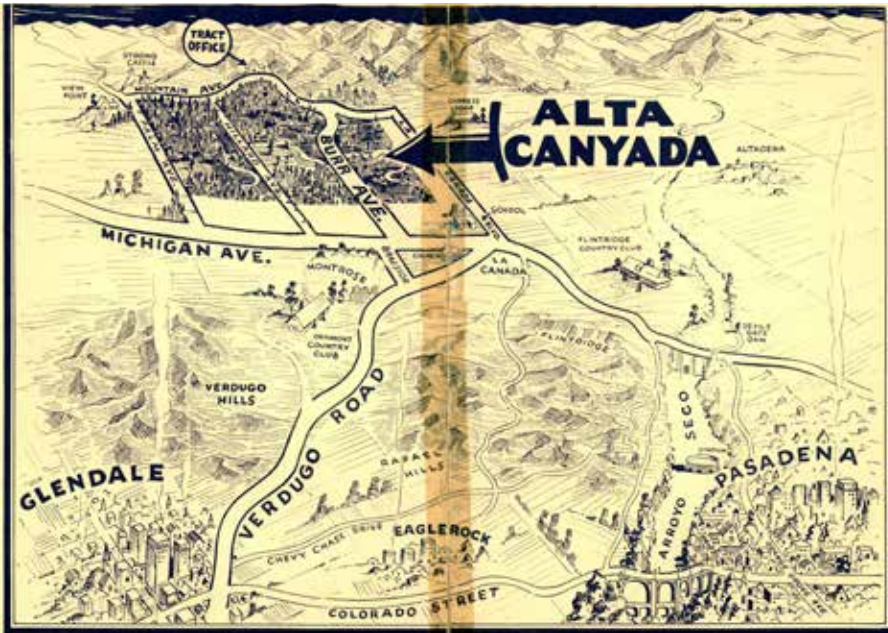
Opposite, bottom, left: "The Gables" Home of George P. Reuter, Alta-Cañyada. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives (Box 1-F11).

Opposite, bottom, right: The cover of an early Alta-Cañyada Estates brochure. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives (Box 1-F11).

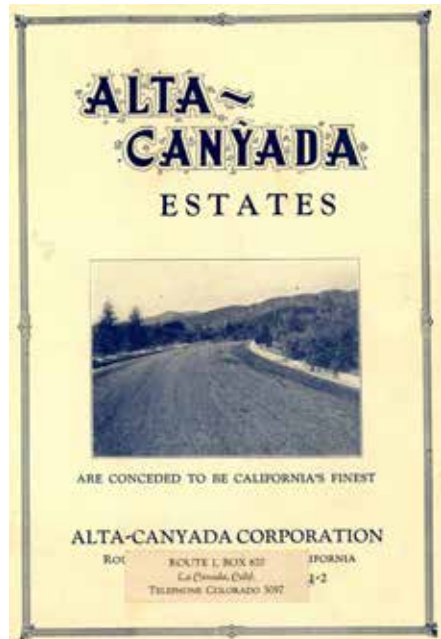
homesites - oranges, lemons, grapes, tomatoes, berries, and grapefruit, which was thought of as unusual for these crops to grow at such an elevation. The owners, through the years, gave away foliage for holiday decorations – holly and English Hawthorn.²⁷

A promotional booklet stated that Alta

Canyada was "for fathers and mothers who are raising fine, upstanding, healthy children," "for the architect, the writer, the musician who requires inspiration," and that it "will never be marred by undesirable residents." Property owners will be fully protected through the rigid enforcement of



"THE GABLES" HOME OF GEORGE P. REUTER, ALTA CANYADA



permanent race and building restrictions.²⁸

The restrictive race requirement was in place, as were regulations for design, color, and type of building. "Open only to desirable members of the Caucasian race – people of character and refinement who will take a keen delight in helping its developers...maintain the highest standard in every detail."²⁹

Many well-known architects were involved in the building of these estates. The estate owners were free to choose the architect they desired if they adhered to the design requirements and review. "Alta-Cañyada will never be marred by cheap, unsightly houses, business structures,

residential income buildings. Residences must be attractive in design and of a color and architectural type that will harmonize with neighboring buildings."³⁰ The architecture styles of the day were Spanish Colonial Revival, English Tudor, French Normandy, and Italianate. By 1924, there were only twenty-four properties left to build on, and architects Clifford A. Truesdell³¹ and Henry Carlton Newton³² were chosen as the consulting architects for the development.³³

Architect Everett Phipps Babcock, who once worked in Wallace Neff's office, designed the Lois and William Jarvis Earl home in 1927.³⁴ William Lee Woollett, the architect of the Million Dollar Theater,³⁵



Top: The home of C. H. McKellips on Fairmont "Altacanyada". Welby Hudson-BUILDER. Published in *Architectural Digest*, ca. 1930.

Right: Newspaper publisher E. Manchester Boddy holding a camellia flower from his Descanso Gardens collection. Photograph by George Anderson. *La Cañada Valley Sun*, 1951.

Opposite: View of the E. Manchester Boddy house. 1934. Dick Whittington Studio. USC Libraries Special Collections.



designed the Monahan house on Fairmont Avenue, and Arthur C. Lebrun, architect of apartments buildings during the 1920-30s, designed the Southcott home.

An exemplary example of the work of renowned architect Paul Revere Williams, early in his career, is the Degnan-Guerra home on Alta Canyon Road. Gina Guerra writes in this issue about her Mediterranean home built in 1927.

Surprisingly, with the race covenants for property owners, Paul Williams had many commissions in the La Cañada Flintridge area. His granddaughter, Karen Hudson, writes in her book, *Paul R. Williams, Architect, A Legacy of Style*, about her grandfather, "People often question how he could possibly be happy when he was designing mansions in areas where he couldn't live while returning home each evening to a small home in a comparatively undesirable, unrestricted neighborhood."³⁶

E. Manchester Boddy, the eventual

creator of Descanso Gardens in La Cañada Flintridge, bought a 1.75-acre property at the corner of Alta Canyon Road and Linda Vista Drive and had a home built in 1927. At the time, Boddy was the owner and publisher of the *Los Angeles Illustrated Daily News*. Boddy and Edwin Earl were acquainted through their newspaper businesses, as well as for their political work for the city, state, and country. The Boddy family's Spanish Colonial-Revival home had five bedrooms and a four-car garage, with a garden of seven waterfalls, a stone grotto, and a stone barbecue. At the time, Boddy spent \$35,000 to build his garden, working around the existing mature trees. The five majestic redwood trees planted by Edwin Earl are still visible from the street. The home now has a tall fence and hedging around it. The elaborate garden area was subdivided into three other properties in the early sixties, with some existing elements still intact.



In 1936, while still living on Alta Canyada and Linda Vista, Boddy purchased property in a nearby canyon to eventually develop into Descanso Gardens. He also owned property north of his home site in the Hall Beckley Canyon, for access to water for his own garden features and to provide stream water and irrigation for Descanso Gardens.³⁷

Other well-known people from the early era living in Alta Canyada were Mae Marsh, the silent film actress with her husband, L.L. Arms, and British-born actor and “he-man” of the movies, Victor McLaglen. He bought an estate for his family retreat and named it ‘Fairhaven’. Far from his life in the movies, his hobbies were his garden and his pet birds and dogs. He loved to entertain friends on his property, and had all the essential accoutrements: pool, multiple tennis courts, a Turkish bath, and a gymnasium. With rolling lawns and views of the ocean, his

“Friendship Garden” was a place of relaxation and retreat.³⁸

In 1925, John Gillespie Bullock, creator of Bullock’s Department Store, purchased a mountain cottage called “Viewpoint” in Alta Canyada for his family. In 1955, the property was acquired through eminent domain for the Palm Crest Elementary School. The La Canada school district has been using the cottage as a storage space since that time. There is an intact Batchelder fireplace in the modest cottage. In 2018, it was reported that the building was to be razed to make room for either a parking lot or administrative space.³⁹ In 2019, the *Outlook Newspapers* wrote that the historic iron gates and the Batchelder tile fireplace would be dismantled and stored.⁴⁰

Life in Alta Canyada was idyllic and filled with garden parties, teas, and weddings, but there were also fires and floods. One fire in 1933, that lasted from

November 21st until the 24th, showed E. Manchester Boddy’s generosity as he opened his home up to journalists from other newspapers and to the fire department officials, providing telephone service, typewriters, coffee, and sandwiches. In this fire, 7.5 square miles were eventually burned. In late 1933 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Youth Camps were set up in Earl Canyon of Alta Canyada as well as neighboring Angeles Crest, La Tuna Canyon, and Arroyo Seco. Three hundred men for three-and-a-half months were brought in to build check dams made of rocks bound with wire for catching debris. Along with that effort, came the spreading sunflower and mustard seeds along with native wild seed and wild oak acorns for erosion control on the hillsides bared from the fire.⁴¹ Sadly, this effort was not in time, as just days later, on New Year’s Day 1934, there was a sudden cloudburst. Water mixing with 600,000



cubic yards of debris poured down the steep slopes of Pickens Canyon, where more than forty people were killed in the flood and hundreds lost their homes. It ruined citrus groves, vineyards, highways, and buildings, with the damage exceeding \$5,000,000.⁴²

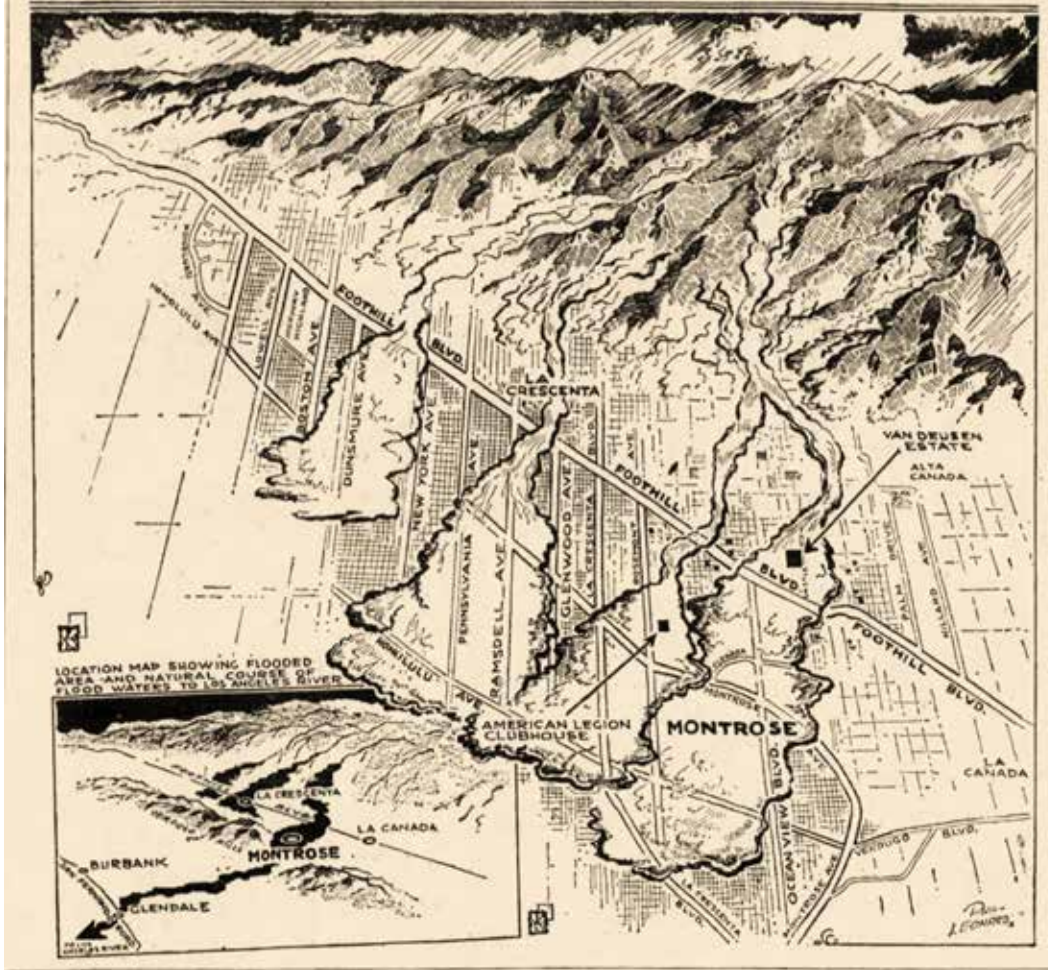
The Victor McLaglen estate “Fairhaven” and lovely garden was damaged in the fire and subsequent flood. Through the efforts of five members of the Arroyo Seco CCC Foresters, his estate was saved, but his garage and four cars were swept away, although the autos were found later with just minor dents and scratches. The rose garden and lawns were damaged, but his rare birds were saved. Many other homes were washed away.⁴³

Life in Alta-Canyada remains shaded by the glorious mature trees. Residents and others enjoy the mountain trails through the area. Currently listed in the *La Cañada Flintridge General Plan Update* as historic, are the residences: Wentzl home “Villa Elena,” Ralph Moses home, Edwin T. Earl home, William Jarvis home, Degnan-Guerra Residence by Paul R. Williams, and the E. Manchester Boddy home. And as previously mentioned, the Deodar Cedar trees on many of the streets of Alta-Canyada are designated historic, as are the nearby Gould Eucalyptus trees. The area’s racial make-up is diverse. With over 95% of the workforce employed in white collar jobs, home prices rate as one of the most expensive in California.⁴⁴ To quote Dr. Jacob Lanterman, “There before us nestles the beautiful settlement of La Cañada, with its live oak groves, its vineyards and orange orchards, the patches of newly cleared land, and acres of green underbrush.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A native Angeleno, Libby Simon spent 30 years as an animation artist and producer, before turning her sights to the world of landscape design and historic preservation. She is presently serving on the Board of CGLHS and is on the Editorial Board for *Eden*. She has been involved in historic preservation with the completion of Historic American Landscape Surveys (HALS) of the San Gabriel Mission, the Los Angeles Ebell landscape by Florence Yoch and Lucile Council, the Old Zoo in Griffith Park, and for 2021, the historic Black community of Val Verde in the Santa Clarita Valley, winning an honorary mention award from the National Park Service. A graduate of the UCLA Extension Landscape Architecture Program, she is now designing and installing residential gardens in the Los Angeles and Pasadena areas.

Sweep of Waters That Dealt Death and Havoc Pictured



Opposite, top: New Year's Day 1934 flood aftermath. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives.

Opposite, bottom: Aerial photograph of Alta-Cañada showing the streets lined in deodar cedars, 1944. Flight DDF_1944, Frame 6-96, November 22, 1944. Courtesy UCSB Library Geospatial Collection.

Left: This illustration from the *Los Angeles Times* shows the path of destruction from the January 1, 1934 flood.

Endnotes

¹ David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986. (59-62).

² Alexander Garvin, *The American City: What Works, What Doesn't*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996. 1-33).

³ Garvin, 31-33.

⁴ Linda McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998, 20-23.

⁵ Terrance Young, *Building San Francisco's Parks 1850-1930*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2004, 71.

⁶ Young, 92.

⁷ Garvin, 50-51.

⁸ Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1982, 56.

⁹ Cranz, 63.

¹⁰ Cranz, 63.

¹¹ John Patterson, "The Development of Public Recreation in the City of Sacramento," Unpublished Master's Thesis, 1957, 9. In Sacramento Archives and Museum Collections Center, Sacramento, CA

¹² *Sacramento Bee*, "Death Summons William Land, Started Penniless; Left Millions," January 2, 1912; Last Will and Testament of William Land, typescript copy in the files of the Department of Parks and Recreation, City of Sacramento, n.d.

¹³ Steven M. Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City*, Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Press, 77.

¹⁴ Avella, 77, 79.

¹⁵ Myrtle Shaw Lord, *A Sacramento Saga: Fifty Years of Achievement- Chamber of Commerce Leadership*, Sacramento:

Sacramento Chamber of Commerce c.1946, 188.

¹⁶ Lord, 189, 199.

¹⁷ Frederick Noble Evans, *Town Improvement*, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1919.

¹⁸ *Sacramento Bee*, "Frederick Evans, Superintendent of Parks, Dies" January 2, 1942; *Who's Who in California*, Los Angeles: Who's Who Publishing, 1940, 2.

¹⁹ Avella, 96.

²⁰ *Sacramento Bee*, "William Land Park Links Work Hurrying," August 20, 1922. The original golf house was designed by Dean & Dean and replaced in the 1950s by a design of Rickey & Brooks. The latter firm also designed the Fairyland playground & a new modernist entrance gate to the zoo in the same period.

²¹ Evans, "Draft General Plan for William Land Park," 1922; "General Plan for William Land Park, Sacramento, California," 1926. Center for Sacramento History, Sacramento, California.

²² City of Sacramento, "Administrative Records, City Parks and Recreation Department 1915-1977." Center for Sacramento History, Sacramento, California.

²³ Evans, "General Plan."

²⁴ William Burg, *Sacramento Streetcars*, Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2006, 72.

²⁵ *Sacramento Bee*, "Atkinson to Get Alligators for Park," 7 September 1915, 1.

²⁶ Kenneth Johnson, "The Sacramento Zoo," typescript in files of City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation, 1.

²⁷ Johnson, 1.

²⁸ *Sacramento Bee*, "Plans for Improving Zoo Grounds Are Made," n.d.

²⁹ *Sacramento Bee*, "Zoo Acquires Kangaroo," January 25, 1933.

³⁰ Sacramento Zoo at <http://www.saczoo.org>.

³¹ Land Park Aerial Photographs circa 1932 in Sacramento Bee Photo Collection, Center for Sacramento History, Sacramento, California.

³² Patterson, 36.

³³ Interview Daisey Mah, Park Gardener, Park Maintenance Department, William Land Park, June 17, 2011.

³⁴ City of Sacramento, "Department of Parks and Recreation Administrative Records, 1915-1977," Center for Sacramento History, Sacramento, California.

³⁵ Correspondence, City of Sacramento to William L. Land, Esq., February 2, 1977. City of Sacramento, Parks and Recreation Department files.

³⁶ Cranz, 126.

³⁷ City of Sacramento, Park and Recreation department files.

³⁸ Sacramento Recreation and Park Committee, "Meeting Minutes, May 1956." Files of City of Sacramento, Parks and Recreation Department.

³⁹ Dates of construction were confirmed as part of a comprehensive park survey conducted in 2011 by Mead and Hunt Engineering and PGALandscape Design for the City of Sacramento, Department of Parks and Recreation.

⁴⁰ Correspondence, City of Sacramento to William L. Land, Esq., February 2, 1977.

⁴¹ Rickey and Brooks, Architects, "Layout Plan and Architectural Drawings for Buildings, Sacramento Zoo Rehabilitation, 1960." files of City of Sacramento, Department of Parks and Recreation.

⁴² This type of roof is composed of two intersecting fields of straight line, each line at a slightly different angle, producing a seemingly rounded shape using straight joists

⁴³ "Sacramento Mid-Century Modern Home Tour," at <http://sacmcmhometour>, June 11, 1961.

⁴⁴ Johnson, 9; Correspondence City of Sacramento to William L. Land, Esq., February 2, 1977.

Early Water Development in La Cañada

BOB MOSES

Left: Natural waterfall in the hills of Alta-Cañiyada. Fairy Cascades in Sutton's Canyon, La Cañada. Bradford D. Jackson postcard, ca. 1910. Courtesy California State Library.

Right: Postcard of picnic in Pickens Canyon, May 9, 1914. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives (LH Mountains).

Opposite, left: Hall Ranch Buildings, from Winery Canyon, circa 1880s. Photograph by Charles Pate. Image property of the La Cañada Congregational Church, courtesy Lanterman House Archives (Pate 112).

Opposite, right: "In Beautiful La Canada Valley," ca. 1915 postcard. Courtesy Lanterman House Archives.



When Jacob Lanterman (1827-1908) and Adolphus Williams purchased the Rancho La Cañada in 1875, they did not receive rights to the water flowing in the canyons of the San Gabriel Mountains that were beyond the bounds of the old Mexican Land Grant. This land already had been homesteaded by the very earliest people to settle in the Crescenta-Cañada Valley, Theodor Pickens and Thomas Hall.

Finding a reliable water source thus was a critical issue for the development of the land in La Cañada, as it was nearly impossible to sell the land if these parcels had no access to water. In 1888 Amoretta Lanterman (1831-1902), Jacob's wife, negotiated the purchase of the water

rights to the Pickens Canyon system from Theodor Pickens, who owned the canyon lands. The Pickens Canyon system consisted of Pickens Canyon and two tributary canyons: Sutton Canyon and Mullally Canyon. All of these canyons had year-round stream flows, although the water from Pickens Canyon sank into the subterranean aquifer as soon as it left the mountains.

In 1891 work began on the formation of the La Cañada Water Company, which was formally incorporated in 1892. Shares in the company were sold to property owners and five shares entitled the holder to one hour's flow from the canyon system each month.

Initially, water was collected behind a small dam in Pickens Canyon. From that point, it flowed in a redwood flume down the east side of Pickens Canyon until it could be delivered to a sand box. The purpose of the sand boxes was to allow sediment to settle out of the water before it moved on down the hill to the property owners. From this first sand box, the water ran in iron pipes to the mouth of the canyon where it entered another sand box. From the east side of the mouth of Pickens Canyon the water then ran in four-inch concrete pipes, in a southeasterly direction. Additional sand boxes were placed at the major lot lines allowing the water to be diverted



south along the lot lines to the individual properties.

The La Cañada Water Company did not develop any reservoirs, leaving it up to the property owners to develop their own means of storing water. Many property owners, including the Lanterman Family, built their own reservoirs. Others relied on cisterns or water tanks to store water between the days when water was sent to their property.

The decade of the 1890s was a very dry period in Southern California and there were times when the streamflow did not reach the top of the flume in which case no water could be sent to the property owners. This prompted shareholders in the company to run pipes further up the canyons to collect the water nearer the springs which were the source. Then, in 1902, Dr. and Mrs. Jacob Lanterman presented the shareholders with a block of 300 shares to be sold to raise money for improvements in the water system. The shares were sold at \$4.00 each, and the resulting funds were used to bore three tunnels into the walls of Pickens Canyon so that the water could be captured below ground to avoid losses to evaporation.

The pipes and flume used to collect the water were a fragile system, subject to many breakdowns caused by rockslides, heavy rains, or fallen trees. Most of the work of maintaining the system fell to Ralph Moses (1865-1950), the *Zanjero* (a Spanish term – from the Arabic – for a ‘Ditch Keeper’). However, in cases of major damage, Moses was assisted by volunteer shareholders who wanted to keep the water flowing.

The streamflow of the Pickens Canyon system was the only source of water for La Cañada from 1892 until 1910. Over fifty wells were drilled in virtually every part of the valley trying to find water during those years. The rocky soil and the

extreme depth of the water table foiled those attempts. In 1910 a well was drilled at the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Hampton Road. This well was 400 feet deep, and it reached the water table on the western edge of the Monk’s Hill Basin, which lies beneath La Cañada and Pasadena. The Valley Water Company was incorporated in September of 1910 with F. D. Lanterman as its president.

In its earliest days, the Valley Water Company pumped its water to a reservoir that was a part of the Lanterman Estate. This reservoir was at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Union Street. A second reservoir was built at the top of Texas Street (now Commonwealth Avenue). In 1917 a third reservoir was built at Flanders Road near what is now Indiana Street. In 1918, the Flintridge Reservoir was constructed on Hampstead Road near Inverness. A fifth reservoir was built in 1921 at the north end of Hampton Road. This reservoir was abandoned in 1934, along with a well at the same site. In 1925 the Lookout Reservoir was built in the hills south of Descanso Drive. In 1928 the Valley Water Company took over the operation of the Hotel Reservoir from the Flintridge Water Company.

A lawsuit was filed in 1937 over rights to withdraw water from the Monk’s Hill Basin, wherein Pasadena claimed it had sole rights to pump water from the aquifer. Other parties to the suit, including Valley Water Company, each alleged that they were entitled to shares of the water. If one totaled all the claims, one would find that the disputants claimed more water than was to be had from the aquifer. Ultimately, a Water Master was appointed, and allocations were made to each entity claiming rights to water from the aquifer. None were happy with their allocation.

In 1949 the Foothill Water Group was formed to pursue the acquisition of

water from the Metropolitan Water District [MWD]. They learned that a change in the law would be necessary to allow the group to become a member of the Metropolitan Water District. This prompted Frank Lanterman to run for State Assembly in 1950. Mr. Lanterman was elected, and in 1951 he introduced the legislation necessary to amend the law so as to allow unincorporated communities to form a Water District. Thus the Foothill Municipal Water District could become a Member of MWD. The legislation was passed and signed into law in 1951. Still, it took until 1955 for the necessary infrastructure to be built to purchase water from the Colorado River from the MWD and deliver it to communities such as Altadena, La Cañada and La Crescenta. The first water received from this new arrangement was in July of 1955.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob Moses is a descendent of some of La Cañada’s earliest settlers. His great-grandfather, Ralph Moses, was the first *Zanjero* in the community, regulating water distribution. He is currently the Facilities Manager at the Lanterman House and has served as board president and many other roles there for several decades.

Celebrating Place

The Extraordinary Career of Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

REUBEN M. RAINEY

"Her extraordinary multifaceted career combines public service with a broad scholarly agenda..."

The career of Elizabeth Barlow Rogers is one of remarkable scope and distinction devoted to environmental stewardship, public service, and cultural landscape history. Today she continues that career unabated, with the publication of her latest book, *Writing the City, Essays on New York*, due to appear this Spring. She is perhaps best known for the alchemy she performed on New York's Central Park, transforming its depressing dereliction into the vibrant public space it is today. To accomplish this formidable feat amidst the caustic arena of New York City politics, she and her team of co-workers created in 1980 the first public-private organization of its kind, the Central Park Conservancy. This unprecedented non-profit organization worked in concert with the financially strapped city to raise funds through private donations. It also took responsibility for the management of the park's restoration and renewal and continues to do so today. Rogers led the Conservancy as President for sixteen years, successfully accomplishing its mission to restore the beauty of the nineteenth-century park as originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, while making sure it also served twentieth-century recreational and social uses. Rogers' Central Park Conservancy idea gained national attention, and citizens in other cities implemented their own versions of it. There is a very good chance your enjoyment of your city's recently renewed parks, where you take restorative walks, have family picnics, or attend amateur league soccer matches was made possible through a public-private initiative modeled on the Central Park Conservancy. Its precedent shapes preservation strategy in

the private realm as well. This past year, the family owners of France's famed seventeenth-century masterpiece, Vaux-le-Vicomte, have been developing with the French government a restoration plan for the chateaux and its gardens along the lines of Central Park's success.

Rogers' catalytic role in the revival of Central Park is complemented by additional outstanding achievements as a scholar, educator, journal editor, environmental steward, creator of foundations, photographer, and exhibition curator. Her extraordinary multifaceted career combines public service with a broad scholarly agenda enriching our understanding and appreciation of the role of "place." For Rogers, "place" is that interweaving of human action, natural forces, social circumstances, economic determinants, and aesthetic sensibilities that creates the spaces in which we live and profoundly affects the quality of our lives.

A native of San Antonio, Texas, as a child she developed a profound love of the beauty of nature and its restorative power through adventurous exploration and close observation of her neighborhood and her family's ranch in the Texas Hill Country. A bachelor's degree in art history from Wellesley College developed her eye for spatial composition, color, form, and line. As a young mother with a child in kindergarten and husband Edward Barlow in law school, she earned a Master's degree from the Yale School of Architecture in city planning. This provided her with a comprehensive understanding of urban form, open space preservation, and the politics of city planning, as well as a deep appreciation of the ideas and values of urban theorist Jane Jacobs. These multiple

experiences formed the intellectual acquirer that surfaced in her later wide-ranging pursuits.

Her scholarly career began almost a decade before her involvement in Central Park's restoration with the publication of her first book in 1971: *The Forests and Wetlands of New York City*. Rogers had moved to New York with her family in 1964, intending to make the city her permanent place of residence. Like many others, she welcomed the opportunity "to find a greater degree of challenge and acceptance" in its dynamic cosmopolitan realm. To gain a deeper understanding of her newly-adopted city, she thoroughly researched the history of its numerous parks and natural areas that included many beautiful wetlands and pristine forests. The result was an informative history that awakened citizens of the city's five boroughs to the abundance of natural areas in the midst of their intensely urban environment. It was also a call to protect and restore these areas, long neglected and damaged by destructive city government policies, such as the dumping of garbage in fragile wetlands, slicing through verdant forests to construct roads, and allowing its once magnificent parks to become derelict. The book's fusion of carefully documented history and pleas for constructive action, written in a clear, engaging prose supplemented with carefully-selected photographic images of her own making, set the tone and quality of many of Rogers' future publications.

Her next book quickly followed a year later and built upon the foundation of the first. *Frederick Law Olmsted's New York* (1972) was published in conjunction with an exhibition at the Whitney Museum of

American Art celebrating the 150th anniversary of Olmsted's birth. It contained Rogers' biography of Olmsted as well as her history and design analysis of the major New York City parks he and partner Calvert Vaux had designed. An illustrative portfolio compiled by William Alex accompanied her text. Rogers gave close attention to the intellectual forces that shaped Olmsted's and Vaux's work, including the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century picturesque tradition and the rapid nineteenth-century transformation of America from a predominantly rural to a more urban society. Rogers emphasized the therapeutic power of the various parks' landscapes (especially those of Central Park and Prospect Park) to relieve the stress of urban living and promote healthy social interaction. The book concluded with a sharp polemic against the present-day desecration of the parks through "degenerate" management, intrusive buildings, and needless statues. She concluded with a call to action:

...it is important ... for man to confirm with his senses that he lives in a world of seasonal rhythms—of vernal buds, falling leaves, drifting snow. Olmsted knew this. His parks are more than exercises in a quaint, outmoded



"Central Park," an 1863 map. Courtesy Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections.

style known as the picturesque. They are still perhaps more than ever, a therapeutic, life-enhancing force, and for this reason they should be allowed to endure.

Rogers heeded her own call, and for decades to come her environmental activism and scholarly writing was a tapestry deeply interwoven with Central Park.

Seven years after assuming leadership of the Central Park Conservancy she published

one of her most influential works, *Rebuilding Central Park: A Management and Restoration Plan* (1987). (She had also found time in the interim to raise two children, write scripts for the TV documentary series, "Wild, Wild World of Animals," and co-author a guide with Jason Epstein of East Hampton, Long Island.) She also divorced in 1974 and a decade later married Theodore Rogers, a corporate executive, lover of literature and the arts, and key participant in the formation of the Central Park Conservancy. His advice, based on a wealth of management experience, was invaluable to Rogers as she led the Conservancy.

Rebuilding Central Park focused on the process and policies that resulted

in the successful renewal of the park. Soon it became the bible for organizations across the country wishing to imitate its success. The highly sophisticated plan based on ecological, historical, architectural, and demographic data gathered by the Conservancy's team of specialists traced the changes in the park over time and used this knowledge to develop a dynamic restoration and management plan well into the future. Rogers characterized it as a document that envisions "... an extended life for a noble

old organism, a policy of curatorship that will preserve for another century at least, the dialectic of stasis and change that has kept it Manhattan's greatest amenity." It also served as a wish list for the Conservancy's fundraising efforts as the park's restoration proceeded in carefully orchestrated stages. The demographical data on the park's participants indicated 80% of today's park participants use it in a similar manner as those of a century ago, namely relaxing and enjoying the presence of others. These preferences were not confined to any racial group, but exactly mirrored those of the racial makeup of the city—55% white, 20% Black, 19% Hispanic, and 6% Asian. This proved decisively that critics of the park's design as a white sanctuary were wrong and that careful attention to the restoration of the park's landscape along the lines of Olmsted and Vaux's original design was justified. Ideology was eclipsed by fact, a rare occurrence then as now.

Rogers chose to retire as President of the Central Park Conservancy in 1995 after overseeing its highly successful renewal. This allowed her to return to her love of research and publication, focusing on the history of landscape design and cultural landscape studies. Before doing so, in 1996 she founded a new organization, The Cityscape Institute, a group devoted to improving the aesthetics of New York's streetscape, including its benches, telephone booths, and other street furniture. Having founded yet another civic-minded organization, she resumed her scholarly interests.

Rogers now began work on her magnum opus, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* (2001). This 544-page survey of immense scope spanned the history of landscape design and city planning from ancient cave paintings and ritual megaliths to late twentieth-century examples of a wide range of project types. Its inclusion of materials from South and East Asia, the Middle East, and South America, as well as Native American examples eclipsed the Eurocentrism typical of many previous



Elizabeth Barlow Rogers.

surveys. Rogers conceived the history of landscape design as "...one way of writing the history of the human mind." Thus she discussed her numerous case studies in their political, social, religious, and natural environmental contexts, as well as their relationship to the other arts of their time. She totally avoided treating them as isolated objects to be understood through purely aesthetic analysis. Clearly written and carefully researched, the book attracted a wide lay readership and also became the standard textbook for professional design programs in landscape architecture throughout the country. It was heavily illustrated, and many of the photographs were supplied by Rogers herself, having been acquired on her world travels, over several years, with her husband Ted. This not only displayed her talent as a photographer but also strengthened the relationship of the book's text to its images.

Rogers' next book, *Romantic Gardens:*

Nature, Art and Landscape Design (2010), grew out of her continuing interest in the Romantic Movement and its relationship to park and garden design in England, France, Germany, and the United States. This seventy-one-page carefully-researched and beautifully-illustrated monograph served as the catalogue for an exhibition she co-curated with the staff of the Morgan Library and Museum. She also loaned several items from her own rare book collection for the exhibition. Rogers had dealt with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romanticism in her comprehensive survey of landscape design and her previous writings on Olmsted. Now she explored it in greater depth, noting its fluid definitions and variations as well as its expression in landscape design, literature, and related arts. She concluded:

...Romanticism is above all a transaction between the human mind and nature in which no universal, but many diverse meanings, elicit a range of personal responses, among which are rapture, delight, pleasurable fear, sweet melancholy, and philosophical contemplation. Although this incomplete list of emotions may sound quaint, the perception of nature as sublime miracle is a residue of Romanticism still capable of offering spiritual sustenance and heightened self-awareness.

Writing the Garden: A Literary Conversation across Two Centuries (2011) followed *Romantic Gardens* in quick succession. Its origin was an invitation from Mark Bartlett, Head Librarian of the New York Society Library, to co-curate a display of garden writers featuring the rare books in the library's collection as well as some of her own. Rogers, in her own words, had "...succumbed to another passion," and become a "serious gardener," so she was pleased to comply. She had been deeply involved in creating gardens for her weekend home in Wainscott, Long

Island, for many years. The book is an insightful commentary on two centuries of delightful and thought-provoking reflections on gardening by a wide assortment of individuals who were both practicing gardeners and gifted writers. She organized her topical sections according to how the writers viewed themselves: nurserymen, philosophers, humanists, travelers, teachers, etc. She also depicted in detail the personalities of each writer and quoted extensively from their works. Included are such individuals as Jane Loudon, Gertrude Jekyll, Henry David Thoreau, Michael Pollan, Edith Wharton, Russell Page, and Vita Sackville-West. The well-illustrated volume included thirty-two images from Rogers' own collection of rare books and photographs.

Rogers' next effort, *Learning Las Vegas: Portrait of a Northern New Mexican Place* (2013), is an engaging investigation of the nature of "place" focusing on a small town of about 13,000 inhabitants. Rogers researched the history of Las Vegas, New Mexico, and walked its streets like a good "shoe leather" reporter. She interviewed its residents and photographed them and the city's landmarks. The result was an in-depth analysis of how the melding of culture, natural forces, economic determinants, and human initiatives created this unique "place" in Northeast New Mexico and how its distinct qualities enriched the lives of those who lived there. In addition to its portrait of a captivating community, the book could serve as a canonical example to architects and planners of the care and caution required to understand a place before attempting any changes in it. Rogers also reminds us that, despite our best efforts, "...place reveals itself ambiguously and never completely....To know a place in all its complexity is impossible . . ." Once

***"Generations to come
will benefit from
her extraordinary
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again, she illustrated the book with exquisite photographs of her own making.

The arc of Rogers' many interests swung back to some of her earlier ones in her next work, *Green Metropolis: The Extraordinary Landscapes of New York City as Nature, History and Design* (2016). Just as she did in her first book on the forests and wetlands of New York City, she called attention to some of the additional landscape treasures of her adopted city. However, as Tony Hiss aptly remarks in his introduction, *Forest and Wetlands* was "a before book," calling for the protection and restoration of New York's derelict and threatened natural areas and parks. In contrast, *Green Metropolis's* "buoyant flavor" was an "after book," more a cautious celebration of accomplishment. The first chapter begins with a natural history of the city and then follows with commentary on seven of New York's significant parks and natural areas, including the High Line, Central Park's Ramble, Freshkills Park, and the still threatened marshes of Jamaica Bay. Rogers continued her "shoe leather" reporting style, interviewing individuals and participating in various groups involved

in protecting and restoring these landscapes. True to form, she provided the striking color photographs.

Rogers' next publication was much anticipated by those who cherish Central Park and are deeply interested in its history. *Saving Central Park: A History and Memoir* (2018) is a rich blend of history and autobiography, recounting in vivid detail how Rogers and her colleagues successfully restored and revived Central Park. It recounts the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of Central Park, focusing on the intentions of its original designers and how later ill-advised additions to the park and mismanagement brought it to near ruin. She interweaves this history with her own account of

the personal influences and values that laid the groundwork for her leadership of the park's restoration: her childhood in Texas, which nurtured her love of the restorative power of nature, undergraduate and graduate studies of art history and city planning at Wellesley College and Yale School of Architecture, and her firm commitment to serve the common good through an active life of environmental stewardship. The most riveting and suspenseful narrative is her detailed discussion of the many obstacles she and her coworkers had to overcome to succeed against formidable odds. Rogers does not use the book to settle scores with old opponents, but treats them with respect despite clear examples of condescension, male chauvinism, and bureaucratic resistance to change. She also provides a brief history of the park after her departure as President of the Conservancy with special attention to the outstanding leadership of Douglas Blonsky, who served a dual role as President of the Conservancy and Park Manager. She ends the book with a detailed account and personal critique of the controversial

project “The Gates” of artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude that resulted in the installation of 7,503 banner-like orange squares of fabric over the park’s pathways in 2005. The most self-revelatory of all of her books, *Saving Central Park* is an extremely valuable historical study combined with a memoir that fascinates and inspires.

Rogers continues to research and publish. As noted, this year a collection of articles, *Writing the City, Essays on New York*, is due to appear. Such ongoing energy and love of research is hardly surprising for one who thrives on challenges and discoveries. A few years ago, she celebrated a birthday by rafting down the Grand Canyon with husband Ted and friends.

In addition to rescuing Central Park and authoring eleven books and numerous essays Rogers has ventured into new terrain: higher education and journalism. In 2002 she created the Garden History and Landscape Studies curriculum at the Bard Graduate Center. Three years later she established a new non-profit, the Foundation for Landscape Studies, with an ambitious mission to “promote an active understanding of the meaning of place through support of landscape history scholarship, publications of the journal *Site/Lines*, and collaboration with other organizations and institutions on landscape-related projects.” Thanks to Rogers’ fundraising virtuosity and dynamic leadership reminiscent of her work on the Central Park Conservancy, the Foundation for Landscape Studies undertook during its sixteen-year history a wide range of successful efforts to fulfill its mission. (Disclosure: I served as a member of the Board of Directors.) On its own initiative it published seven important publications in the field of landscape studies, including three translations of classics in the history of design and two exhibition catalogs for the Morgan Library and Museum. Its

“Thanks to Rogers’ fundraising virtuosity and dynamic leadership reminiscent of her work on the Central Park Conservancy, the Foundation for Landscape Studies undertook during its sixteen-year history a wide range of successful efforts to fulfill its mission.”

nationally-recognized annual book awards brought attention to the distinguished work of authors in the field of landscape studies (the J. B. Jackson Prize) and assisted others in having their work published (the David Coffin Publication Grants). It also maintained a constantly updated web-site that included book reviews and a comprehensive bibliography as well as links to several thousand images of important works of landscape design. In addition to its book awards programs, its “Place Maker Award” recognized individuals who have created a garden or estate of great beauty, while its “Place Keeper Award” acknowledged stewards of important landscapes open to the public. Finally, its rarely bestowed Lifetime Achievement Award celebrated distinguished designers, scholars, or conservation activists.

Among the Foundation’s most important accomplishments was the publication of *Site/Lines: A Journal of Place*, which had a run of thirty-three issues from 2003-2021. It was published digitally and in hard copy. Rogers, as chief editor, organized the journal thematically on such topics as “The Long Life of the Japanese Garden,” or “Black Lives

Matter: Race and Reckoning.” Invited authors contributed several essays on the themes, and often book reviews were included. The essays covered a wide range of topics, including park and garden history, city planning, and the interpretation of ordinary landscapes. Rogers and her staff, Associate Editor Alice Truax, Assistant Editor Margaret Sullivan, and Copy Editor Margaret Oppenheimer, strictly required contributions be written in a clear prose, devoid of the unintelligible, mind-numbing jargon often found in the work of academicians. This enabled the journal to reach a wide audience.

In June of 2021 the Foundation for Landscape Studies ceased operation. However, its legacy will endure through the work of the University of Virginia School of Architecture’s Center for Cultural Landscapes. This research center will continue the Foundation’s book awards program and keep a complete run of *Site/Lines* online. In addition, the Center’s Landscape Studies Initiative is presently employing Rogers’ master work, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History*, as the all-important structural foundation for a pioneering digital interdisciplinary program of research and curriculum formation involving the humanities, biological sciences, social sciences, and the design disciplines. This unprecedented effort promises to transform the field of cultural landscape studies.

At present Rogers and her husband Ted continue to be involved in a multi-dimensional land stewardship program they initiated in 2002 for the C. L. Browning Ranch, a 977-acre property in the Texas Hill country that she inherited from her father. The program consists of burns for soil regeneration,

rainwater conservation to promote aquifer recharge, expansion of scenic vistas by selected removal of excessive underbrush, and an arboricultural initiative to promote tree health, increase desirable forms of wildlife, and protect rare wild bird species. It is also intended to provide an example of good land management for farmers of the region, which is undergoing rapid development that

threatens its scenic beauty and fragile ecosystems. To ensure future enlightened management, the ranch has been placed in a private land trust with the responsibility to ensure future owners will comply with its strict management policies and maintain it as an undivided parcel. The comprehensiveness of the plan and its emphasis on the future recalls the one she and her colleagues developed for Central Park.

Rogers remains active in several important service organizations and is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards. She is a life trustee of the Central Park Conservancy and remains active on a number of important boards, including the National Association of Olmsted Parks, the Olana Partnership, the Battery Conservancy, and the Library of American Landscape History. Her awards are numerous and distinguished. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and recipient of its La Gasse Medal. Other recognitions include the Green-Wood Historic Fund's DeWitt



Central Park, 1875. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

Clinton Award in Arts, Literature, Preservation, and Historic Research, the Rockefeller Foundation's Jane Jacobs Medal for lifetime achievement, and the Henry Hope Reed Award from the School of Architecture of the University of Notre Dame. In 2013 the Preservation League of New York bestowed on her its Pillar of New York Award, and, more recently, in 2016, she received the rarely awarded Gold Medal of the New York Botanical Garden.

Those of us who have worked with "Betsy" cherish the experience. I recall our first meeting at a conference on Olmsted's parks in New York. Having lived in New York for a decade in my earlier career, I was familiar with its typical tough political climate. I expected the person who had saved Central Park to be a brash individual with the necessary chutzpah to have prevailed in New York's political tsunami. Much to my surprise, I encountered a modest, charming, and gracious individual who wore lightly her powerful intellect and scholarly expertise. Throughout our conversation, I noted just how carefully she listened to

my thoughts and quickly sensed her gift of empathy that made her such an effective team leader. However, on several later occasions I have observed just how quickly she can transition into what she refers to as her "executive mode,"—a certain charismatic decisiveness necessary when there is a job to be done rapidly and efficiently.

Generations to come will benefit from her extraordinary achievements which continue unabated and have done so much to help us discover, appreciate, and protect the places that enrich and sustain our lives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

REUBEN RAINEY, FASLA, professor emeritus at the University of Virginia, taught landscape architecture history and theory for more than thirty years. A former professor of religious studies, Rainey has written on a wide variety of topics from Italian Renaissance landscapes to modern "healing gardens." He is the coproducer of the ten-part PBS documentary *Gardenstory* and codirector of the Center for Design and Health at the University of Virginia.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear CGLHS Members,

This being my first Annual Report to you as the incoming President of CGLHS, allow me to begin by saying what an honor it has been to take the helm of the organization for the past year. Back in the late 90s, I was a young Horticulturist fresh out of college when I first became aware of CGLHS. I never could have imagined I would someday be working alongside such a distinguished and dedicated group of landscape enthusiasts, let alone leading the organization!

I have so much to be grateful for in this respect. During these trying times, I wish to focus on all that we as an organization can be thankful for, and at the pinnacle of that list is you, our equally distinguished and dedicated membership. Without your ongoing passion and interest in the historical landscape studies that CGLHS works to provide, we would not be here, and we are genuinely grateful for your continuing support. I am also thankful for the support and dedication that the CGLHS board has offered me this past year, and I would like to recognize recent past president Christy O'Hara for her support and mentorship, as well as *Eden* editor Steven Keylon whose energy and passion have truly transformed our journal.

Although we desperately miss seeing you in person (and hope to see you at our annual conference in Los Angeles this autumn), I was rather impressed to see how many online talks and events we were able to offer in 2021. We had nine in total, thanks in great part to Janet Gracyk and her tireless leadership of our Events Committee. Our lecture season began in February with a presentation on "Shaping Landscape Architecture in the Early 20th Century: Race, Gender, and Difference" presented by Thaisa Way, Program Director for Garden & Landscape Studies at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, followed in March by JC Miller, co-author of "Modern Public Gardens: Robert Royston and the Suburban Park and Robert Royston: Landscape Architect." In April Stewart Traiman offered his insights into genealogy and "How to Research 201: a review guide to researching people." In May we were able to offer two online lectures, "Documenting Landscapes in Perpetuity: The Historic American Landscapes Survey" by acting Chief of the National Park Service HALS program Chris Stevens, followed by "The Glamorous Gardens of Tommy Tomson" presented by *Eden* Editor Steven Keylon. In June CGLHS partnered with the North

American Japanese Garden Association to bring you a primer on "Japanese Gardens in California" co-presented by Steven Pitsenbarger, gardener at the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco, Shozo Kagoshima, Executive Director of Hakone Estate & Gardens in Saratoga, and City of Los Angeles Landscape Architect Patrick Rigney. October was ripe for our next feature entitled "Apples & Ciders & Trees (oh, my!)" brought to us by Tom Hart of the Humboldt Cider Company and Brandon Buza, a San Francisco-based orchard and cider historian. This unique presentation included a cider tasting! We rounded out our 2021 lecture season with two November talks: "An Introduction to Landscape Photography" presented by photographers Millicent Harvey and Stephen Schafer, in partnership with the California Preservation Foundation (CPF), followed by a presentation on "San Francisco's Golden Gate Park: A Thousand and Seventeen Acres of Stories" by author and historian Christopher Pollock who has contributed several articles to *Eden* and who, we hope, will be leading an in-person tour of Golden Gate Park in April of this year.

As we program more events and talks for 2022, we are looking forward to a presentation on "The Historic Gardens of Old Monterey" by former CGLHS board member David A. Laws on May 11, and of course we hope you mark your calendars for the weekend of October 14th when we host our annual in-person conference on the "Past, Present and Future of the Los Angeles River".

Other items of note include nearing a publishing deal for *Essential Eden*, an anthology of the best articles from the past twenty-five years of *Eden*, and ongoing work to improve our website's relevance and functionality. To that end, we will be reaching out to you with a survey shortly.

Thank you again for your support and engagement with CGLHS. To reiterate my sentiment from the beginning, we are truly grateful and blessed to be a part of this wonderful organization and have you as one of our members. Be safe and we look forward to seeing you in 2022!

Sincerely,

Keith W. Park

Opposite, top: Our lecture in October, "Apples & Ciders & Trees (oh, my!)," featured a cider tasting.

Opposite, bottom: "Documenting Landscapes in Perpetuity: The Historic American Landscapes Survey" was the subject of our May Zoom lecture.

Apples

- Wild Crabapples, European, Eastern U.S. Varieties
- Surprise
 - Red-fleshed, red-blossomed
 - *Malus Niedzwetskyana* Descendant
- 30 Varieties of red-fleshed apples
- Hundreds of Additional Varieties
 - Pink Pearl, Waltana, Wickson Crab, Jonwin
- California Nursery Company



2021 HALS Challenge

Historic Black Landscapes



Agricultural Landscapes, Athletic Fields, Campuses, Cemeteries, Churches, Communities, Forts, Gardens, HBCUs, Historic Districts, Historic Sites, Industrial Landscapes, Memorials, Monuments, Neighborhoods, Parks, Residential Landscapes, Resorts, Streetscapes...

<https://thefield.asla.org/2021/01/14/the-2021-hals-challenge-historic-black-landscapes/>

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Above: Looking west along the Los Angeles River from the Fletcher Drive Bridge in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles River will be the subject of our 2022 Annual Conference. Photo by Downtowngal. Courtesy Creative Commons (BY-SA 4.0).

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Front Cover: The front gate of the Degnan Estate with its *faux bois* planter.

Back Cover: *Faux bois*-draped standards with elegant wrought-iron gates grace a portal to the Degnan Estate in La Cañada Flintridge. Note the *faux bois* planters topping each standard. Photo by Gina Guerra.