ALTADENA HERITAGE

ADVOCACY & PRESERVATION

Spring/Summer 2021

ALTADENA HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

Health Issue

Altadena's Beginning as Mecca for the Ill

by Michele Zack

Ours is not the first pandemic in which hearts have been gripped by fear of contagion and death, when coughs and sneezes caused panic, and when people fled cities for clean country air.

In the United States, the end of the Civil War and completion of the Transcontinental Railroad was such a time, when tuberculosis provided extra or the primary motivation to migrate west. TB had become the main cause of urban adult death by around mid-century.

The mesa today known as Altadena Meadows was the site of the first sanatarium.

Altadena's settlement and early years were utterly intertwined with this massive westward movement and health crisis. Unlike the single year of pandemic we've lived through, this earlier epidemic persisted from 1865 through the early 1900s. At the end of the immigrant trail, the newish state of California was coincidentally undergoing a defining experience and forming its identity. Less known and understood, but arguably as significant as our Gold Rush (1849-59), was our Health Rush. An accepted estimate is that 25% of the hundreds of thousands of westering people moved for reasons of health. Not every ill person made it to California, but of those who did, most ended up in the state's warm, dry south. Many reinvented themselves here, and became Californians.

The study of climate, called climatology, evolved from the mid-19th century in tandem with tuberculosis in crowded, industrializing cities in the East and Midwest. Although the tuberculosis bacteria was identified in 1860, no reliable cure was discovered until WWII. Many therapies were tried. Hundreds of thousands died, and fear of the disease pulsed through society. From the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries, moving to a healthy climate with plenty of fresh air was the most-recommended therapy, and not just for TB — but for all pulmonary diseases, as well as other conditions including alcoholism, neurasthenia, and more generally, health broken by the Civil War. After 1900, isolation became understood to be the best way to stop the spread of tuberculosis, and the sanitaria movement began containing the disease. (see article on La Viña, page 6)

Please turn to page 8

Upcoming Event

Golden Poppy Celebration

Sunday May 23rd
at 4 PM
Online

Remember to renew! (see back cover)

We communicate mainly by email; please let us know if you are not receiving email from us or if your address has changed.

Letter from the Chair

Greetings! It's been a tough year. I do hope you are all doing well now, and getting vaccinated as we (hopefully) near the end of this pandemic. We miss seeing you in person but going virtual has motivated us to find creative ways to connect. We have been hard at work on a number of new projects, and we're grateful that technology gives the ability to keep putting on our programs, our monthly Third Thursdays, our Tree Workshops, last December's Holiday Celebration, and last year's Golden Poppy event.

Monthly Email Updates

Our communications chair Catherine Cadogan came up with the brilliant idea and took the initiative to send out monthly email updates about happenings at AH and around town. It's a great way for us to stay in touch and keep our members informed. We've heard you enjoy our monthly e-news! If it's not showing up in your inbox, please contact us and make sure we have your correct email address.

Street Lighting

We continue to inform the community and engage with the county on their plans to convert our High-Pressure Sodium streetlights to LED. We support this energy-saving move, but conversion has gone badly in other cities, so AH is urging the county and Edison to make Altadena a showcase for conversion — LEDs don't have to be glaring, too bright, or too blue. Design for our community lighting needs to consider issues of safety, our unique foothill ecology, and the beauty of our night skies. For a full understanding of the issue (if you missed our March Third Thursday) check out the video on our YouTube channel, and listen to experts offer a clear and entertaining explanation of the issues and solutions.

New Membership Database

Board member Kathleen McDonnell is currently evaluating a new software system that will integrate the management of memberships, events, and communications. We look forward to having an efficient and user-friendly tool that will make keeping track of things easier for us and more engaging for you. The pay off will be time saved to allow our volunteer board to spend more time on great programming, events, advocacy, and making connections.

Tree Giveaway

Sponsored by So Cal Edison through our program to reduce the urban heat island effect in Altadena, our tree giveaway was a great success. We distributed 40 trees, focusing on areas in and around Altadena with minimal tree canopy. It was also one of the few times we had the opportunity to interact in person, masked of course, and we are thrilled to hear from recipients who continue to send photos of their planted trees getting established. In the run-up to the give-away, Dr. Jerrold Turney led three workshops: *Picking the Right Tree for Your Space, Pruning a Tree Properly for Long-Term Health*, and *Planting a New Tree*. Steve Hofvendahl led a 4th tree workshop on *Growing Rare and Unusual Fruit Trees in Altadena*. If you missed these excellent workshops, they are all available on our website and YouTube channel.

Reminder: Golden Poppy Is Coming

We look forward to seeing everyone at our virtual Golden Poppy Awards on May 23rd at 4 p.m. More details to come. Thank you to volunteers who participated in the nominations and judging for the Golden Poppy Awards: Crystal Nerone, Kathleen Swaydan, Vickie & Evan Thompson, Sandy Goodenough, Jae Rand, and Michele Zack — and board members Rob Bruce, Val Zavala and Kathleen McDonnell.

Good Things on AH Website

If you haven't seen our website in a while, check out altadenaheritage.org where we update recent events and news, and you can also access previous newsletters, events, and our Architectural Database. Our YouTube channel is packed full of great videos including Odes to Altadena featuring Altadena writers, our Third Thursdays, Tree Workshops, last year's Golden Poppy winners and more.

Owen Brown Gravesite

Altadena Heritage has been working for decades to preserve the hilltop gravesite of Owen Brown, son of abolitionist John Brown. Great progress has been made in acquiring the land, and now an official LA County Committee is working to preserve and maintain the gravesite, as well as developing associated educational programming. Past Altadena Heritage Chair, Michele Zack, leads the new committee of stakeholders, all committed to making sure the work started so many years ago will at last reach fruition. You can find more about this committee and how to attend the public meetings here: https://planning.lacounty.gov/agenda/obg

We want to hear from you

If you have ideas for Third Thursday events, community issues that might need our attention, or any other feedback, please reach out to us - altadenaheritage@gmail.com - we look forward to hearing from you. See you around town,

Sharon Sand

2021 Altadena Heritage Board

Sharon Sand, Chair
Val Zavala, Treasurer
Anne Chomyn, Secretary
Rob Bruce, Preservation
Catherine Cadogan, Events
Kathleen McDonnell, Membership

Mark Goldschmidt, Newsletter Editor

Spotlight on Streetlight Conversion

Our March Third Thursday program on LED streetlight conversion in Altadena engaged more than 60 people for an eye-opening evening. Experts on night lighting, Dr. Travis Longcore, professor at the UCLA Institute of the Environment & Sustainability, and James Benya, with extensive experience designing urban street lighting, spoke and gave a Q&A that went overtime. If you missed it, visit altadenaheritage.org and you will see (from space!) how lighting conversion is affecting night skies, and much more.

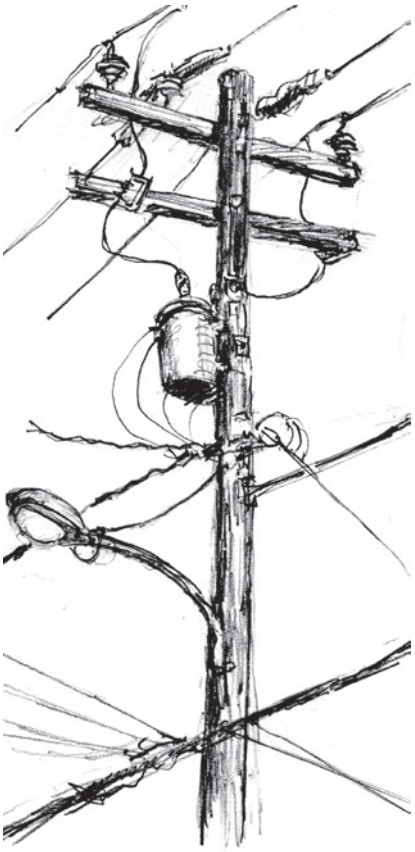
Altadena Heritage's involvement began two years ago, when we published an infrastructure-themed newsletter that included an article on LA County's planned LED streetlight conversion. This is happening all over the country and world to save energy and maintenance costs — but hasn't gone well everywhere. We have since dived in, learned a lot, and put our imminent conversion on the front burner of education/advocacy efforts because it will be with us for generations.

First, a tour of Altadena's nightscape revealed its variety and randomness — from no light at all in some streets, to the familiar yellow glow of high pressure sodium lamps hanging high on power poles, to lighting districts in neighborhoods with handsome light poles closer to the ground. These latter put light where we need it, on streets and sidewalks. It is anti-intuitive, but more light does not translate to more safety or better visibility.

County Public Works assures us the new LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes) would be "dark sky compliant," but what does that mean? This is a massive, multi-million dollar project the County, partnering with Edison, will take years to complete — with no plans for public review offered. Few of us have any idea of the consequences.

But over a year ago, we were given an idea when several intersections were converted to LEDs in an initial rollout in Altadena. People immediately started noticing the new eyeball-piercing blue glare, which triggers a whole physiological reaction (glare doesn't "stay" in our eyes.) One example is at Allan and New York, where nine light poles replaced three. Nancy Whalen started a group called Softlight Altadena, and contacted Heritage about starting a conversation with LA County to initiate a much-needed lighting plan for Altadena. We've worked successfully with our Supervisor's office on a number of projects over the years, and agreed to team up.

Our coalition has grown to 10 local groups (listed below), and led us to a wealth of research and science on how LED conversions impact safety, human health, wildlife, night skies, and historic ambiance. We learned that done well, the goals of saving money and safely lighting streets are achievable. But over the past decade, many cities made mistakes converting to LEDs, leading to unhappy citizens and expensive re-dos and retrofits, probably because the technology has evolved so quickly. Standards keep shifting as a body of evidence grows of negative health and safety impacts of high Kelvin, blue-rich diodes. (Kelvin is a measure of "color temperature," with higher numbers tending toward blue and lower toward yellow.) We humans learn from experience, but the combination of rapid technological change and the slower pace of civic bureaucracy, contracts, and supply chains, hasn't generally been a recipe for success in LED conversions. There are, however, several positive examples we want to learn from!



Typical Altadena Streetlight.

Our goal is to get the best possible conversion for our community —let Altadena be a County model for doing it right. We need a comprehensive plan before the conversion goes forward, instead of reacting to what we don't like, as we did at those intersections. A plan is necessary because it allows us to measure things and pose questions we have now become educated enough to ask: How much energy is being saved? What will the new number of lamps be, compared to what we have now? What illumination will be achieved? Must all lights be 40 feet above the street hanging on already-overburdened poles? Will all lights be uniform, or will a zoned/timed approach be taken, according to commercial or residential use? Based on what we have learned so far, we are asking for LEDs to be diffused and amber-coated, with a eye-friendly kelvin rating of 2200-2700 for optimum visibility and safety.

We appreciate very much that Supervisor Kathryn Barger responded to our queries last year by directing that County Public Works and Southern California Edison "pause" Altadena's conversion until we have a plan addressing public input and answers to our questions. Thank you, Supervisor, for having Public Works change out the blinding 4000 Kelvin, undiffused lamps on Allen and New York!

We want to acknowledge all the groups who joined us, or wrote letters to Supervisor Barger, supporting a plan to preserve health and safety along with our historic ambiance; Altadena came together so beautifully on this! Besides our organization and Softlight Altadena, groups include The Altadena Town Council (and its Safe Streets Committee), Neighbors Building a Better Altadena, Altadena Rotary, Altadena Chamber of Commerce, Altadena Crest Trail Restoration Working Group, Altadena Arts Coalition, LA Bat Rescue (its President lives in Altadena!), Altadena Arts Coalition, and the Arroyo Seco Foundation.

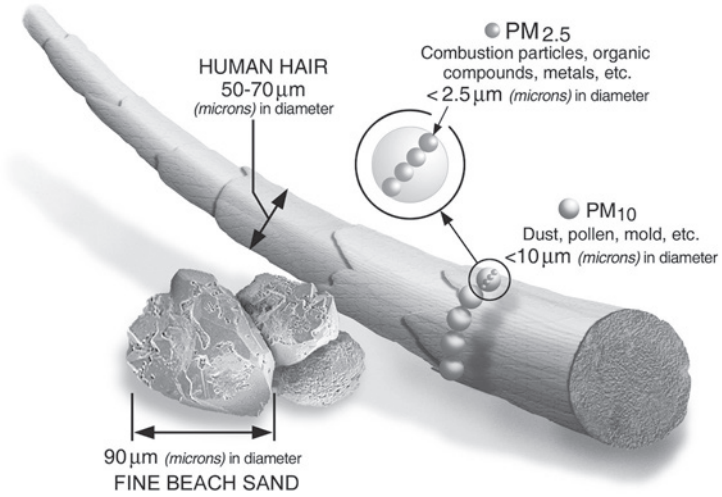
What's going on with Altadena's air?

By Anne Chomyn

Air pollution smells bad and looks bad; it also makes us sick and shortens our lives.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) defines air pollution as "any substance in the air that is harmful to people or the environment." The two worst pollutants are fine particulate matter 2.5 microns in diameter or less, called PM2.5, and ozone. Both are primarily by-products of the combustion of fossil fuels, and both are components of smog.

Altadena has higher PM2.5 levels than about 60 percent of census tracts in California on the California Healthy Places Index; our average PM2.5 level is 10 micrograms per cubic meter. During the Bobcat fire (that sickened many) last summer, levels reached the 400s. Not doing so well with ozone, either: Altadena's levels are higher than 77% of California census tracts as onshore winds over the LA basin blow pollution until it is stopped by our front range, which traps it and other pollutants.



Altadena Heritage has committed to educate the community on what we can do locally about problems affecting health and environment. We are in the third year of an SCE grant called "Combating the Urban Heat Island Effect," which targets the most effective actions to lower temperatures — which, coincidentally, also improve air quality. We've focused on planting trees and limiting/eliminating use of gas-powered small off-road engines (SORE) such as gas leaf-blowers, two actions that reduce air pollution.

Low prioritization of regulating these small gas engines in California has brought us to an unfortunate benchmark in 2021: SORE now produce more smog-forming pollutants than all passenger cars in the state. [Numerous studies have shown PM2.5 and ozone significantly shorten human lifespans, primarily through cardiovascular disease and lung cancer, but also through other conditions]. Pollution is linked to more premature death than smoking, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and even war. In 2015, 8.8 million people globally died early because of air pollution; smoking caused 7.2 million premature deaths.

The following summarizes the main villains fouling our air:

PM2.5

Particulate matter (PM) is a term for a mixture of solid particles, liquid droplets, or a combination of the two, suspended in the air. PM 2.5 (measuring 2.5 microns or less in diameter — for scale, the average human hair is 75 microns in diameter) is the most problematic. When PM2.5 particles are inhaled they either remain in the lungs or are absorbed into the blood stream because they are so small, causing far worse effects than larger particles such as ordinary dust. PM2.5 are mostly generated by combustion of gasoline, oil, diesel, and wood, either directly emitted or from gases and organic compounds combining in the atmosphere.

A study of 78,000 California men and women from 1982 to 2000 found long-term exposure to PM2.5 associated with elevated death risk from cardiovascular disease. Acute short-term exposure (as during the Bobcat Fire) also causes premature mortality, increased hospital admissions for heart or lung causes, acute and chronic bronchitis, asthma attacks, emergency room visits, and respiratory symptoms.

By 2030 residential wood burning is projected to be the single largest source of PM2.5 (sometimes called black carbon) in California. The Southern California Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) addresses this by sending out "No Burn Day" alerts when high levels of PM2.5 are predicted. SCAQMD also has an incentive program to replace wood burning fireplaces with gas-burning ones.

Larger particulates such as PM10 (10 microns or smaller), including dust, pollen, smoke, and fragments of bacteria, can also cause tissue damage and lung inflammation, but being larger, particles tend to lodge in the larger upper airways of the respiratory system. They are a health hazard and can be irritants, but are not absorbed into the bloodstream and are less dangerous than PM2.5.

Ozone

Ozone is a major component of smog. Nitrogen oxides and volitile organic compounds (VOCs) produced by fossil fuel-burning engines, factories, consumer products, paint evaporation, and other sources undergo chemical reactions to form ozone and other components of smog. UV light and heat accelerate these chemical reactions. Conditions for smog formation are perfect in summer when an inversion layer covers the Los Angeles basin, trapping and cooking pollutants in the sunshine.

Ozone is a powerful oxidant, it can kill living cells on contact. People vary in health susceptibility to ozone, but high levels in our atmosphere can damage tissues of the respiratory tract, and cause inflammation that reduces the volume of air inhaled. It also damages plants, rubber, and plastics, and has deleterious effects on pets, wildlife, and insects. Ozone has a characteristic odor which some people can detect at low levels. Altadena's high ozone levels need addressing. Catalytic converters have reduced the overall ozone level by 60% — yet it remains a threat to health.

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SORE

As motor vehicles become ever cleaner, small off-road engines (SORE) such as 2 and 4-stroke engines powering lawn and garden equipment use technology that has not improved in a long time. One hour of a noisy gas leaf blower produces as much smog-forming pollution as a 2017 Toyota Camry driving from Los Angeles to Denver. A four-stroke lawn mower does marginally better, polluting in an hour the same as that Camry driving from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. This is because regulations that mandate how much pollution passenger cars can emit have gradually led to today's cars being 99% cleaner than in 1970. In the same period, SORE have proliferated and are more loosely regulated.

There are more SORE in California (16.7 million) than light duty passenger cars (13.7 million) with 86% of them used in residential and commercial lawn and garden equipment. According to the SCAQMD, SORE produce more smog-forming pollutants than all passenger cars, and 8% of all VOCs released into the atmosphere of the South Coast air basin.

What is being done (and considered)?

California Air Resources Board's mission is to protect the public from the harmful effects of air pollution, and to institute programs and policies to fight climate change. Historically, it focused on reducing motor vehicle emissions — because cars and trucks contributed the most PM2.5 and smog-forming chemicals. But now, greater focus on SORE is needed.

Because, even though we can celebrate having cleaner air today than in the 60's and 70's — LA County and the San Joaquin Valley still have the worst air quality in the country. Nine percent of Altadena children suffer from asthma, a disease strongly linked to air pollution. Data piling up moved the Governor to issue an Executive Order accelerating our state's move to a low carbon, sustainable and resilient future. The most dramatic result of this so far is the decision to ban the sale of internal combustion engines in cars and light trucks in California by 2035.

CARB began setting emission standards for SORE in 1990 when there were far fewer of them; those sold today are 40-80% cleaner — if well maintained. But as comparing them with passenger vehicles makes clear, this approach has not kept up with the problem — and we haven't even addressed sound pollution in this article.

The Governor's Executive Order and community feedback have, however, led the agency to consider abandoning attempts to regulate SORE — and to move to requiring that manufacturers sell zero emission equipment only (with the exception of generators) by 2024. Altadena Heritage supports this position, and additionally recommends closing the loophole allowing gas leaf blowers an exemption from noise ordinances. If you agree, please contact CARB with your public comment! (sore2021@arb.ca.gov)

Yes, air quality has improved in Los Angeles County over the last 50 years, and yes, pollution continues to negatively impact health. CARB and SCAQMD chip away at pollution sources, encouraging the phase out of fossil fuel-burning vehicles and devices. But as climate change, air quality, and health crises converge, we need bolder, faster action from public agencies that exist to protect our health.

Altadena Health by the Numbers

82.1 years
life expectancy

24%
residents who are obese

11%
smokers

11%
adults with depression

9%
children have asthma

17%
adults without medical insurance

3%
children without medical insurance

3,296
cases of Covid-19*

73
deaths due to Covid-19

Source: Los Angeles County City and Community Health Profiles June 2018
* as of April 20, 2021

http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ohae/docs/cchp/pdf/2018/Altadena.pdf

Assembled by Val Zavala

A Short History of La Viña

by Val Zavala

Tuberculosis has killed more people than any other disease in the history of humankind. (Let that sink in.) Its bacterium lodges in the lungs, creating pustules that cause bloody coughs, hacking, and lung pain. Victims waste away or are consumed. Thus, TB was dubbed "consumption." Some strains killed in a matter of days; this was called galloping consumption. Other patients survived years, seemingly cured. Still others lived long but debilitated lives. The elite were not spared. Lord Bryon, Anton Chekov, King Edward VI, Frederic Chopin and three of the Bronte sisters all died of "the wasting disease." In the first half of the 19th century so many poets and writers died of it that a pervasive belief was that intelligent and sensitive people were particularly vulnerable.

Dr. Stehman met Pasadena's prominent philanthropic leader S. Hazard Halstead, and together (with help from Norman Bridge, a fellow physician from Chicago who had recovered from TB in Sierra Madre), spearheaded fundraising for construction of La Viña Sanatorium. It opened in 1909 with 17 bungalows. Two years later thirty-six more rooms opened. In addition to isolation to halt its spread, TB treatments offered were ones then available: clean air, rest, and a healthy diet. La Viña was one of dozens of sanatoria serving thousands of TB "pioneers" lured to southern California to escape the cold, crowded, and unsanitary cities in the east and Midwest. At least five TB sanatoria were located in Altadena in the new century, with La Viña being the largest and longest-lived.

La Viña Sanitorium in the 1920s.

But from the mid-1850s, TB grew into the major cause of all adult death in US cities, fueled by crowded and unsanitary living and working conditions precipitated by the Industrial Revolution. The outbreak lasted for decades and brought health seekers west. A TB hospital was built at the north end of Lincoln Avenue on the site of a vineyard owned by the Giddings family — the same Giddings who established Mountain View Cemetery 30 years earlier. In 1911 "La Viña Sanatorium" opened, and for more than six decades offered care and sometimes a cure for 50,000 tuberculosis patients.

A driving force behind La Viña was Dr. Henry Stehman, a physician from Chicago who barely survived TB himself. In 1899 he moved to Pasadena, long touted as a paradise for recovering consumptives — just as isolation became understood as the best way to slow infection rates. Once recovered, the modest doctor quickly turned his attention to treating other TB patients.

Historian Cecilia Rasmussen of the LA Times described life at La Viña. "There were four horses, chickens, turkeys, cattle, orange and grapefruit trees, vineyards, and its own post office. Income from selling the grapes, eggs and milk helped defray expenses and feed the patients. The income from grapes, however, dropped each year as a rapidly expanding deer herd in the area ate more of the harvest. As part of their treatment, some patients helped lay sidewalks and assisted in gardening to help strengthen their muscles. Others were encouraged to try arts and crafts, with the hope that they would produce articles that they could sell themselves. The average cost of care was $1.41 per day."

How successful was the regimen? Certainly, escaping contagious crowded settings and adopting a healthy lifestyle helped many recover. Nevertheless, TB mortality was high in 1900 — 194 per 100,000 patients. Today, with testing and antibiotics, TB is rare and manageable. The American Lung Association reports 0.2 deaths per 100,000 Americans.

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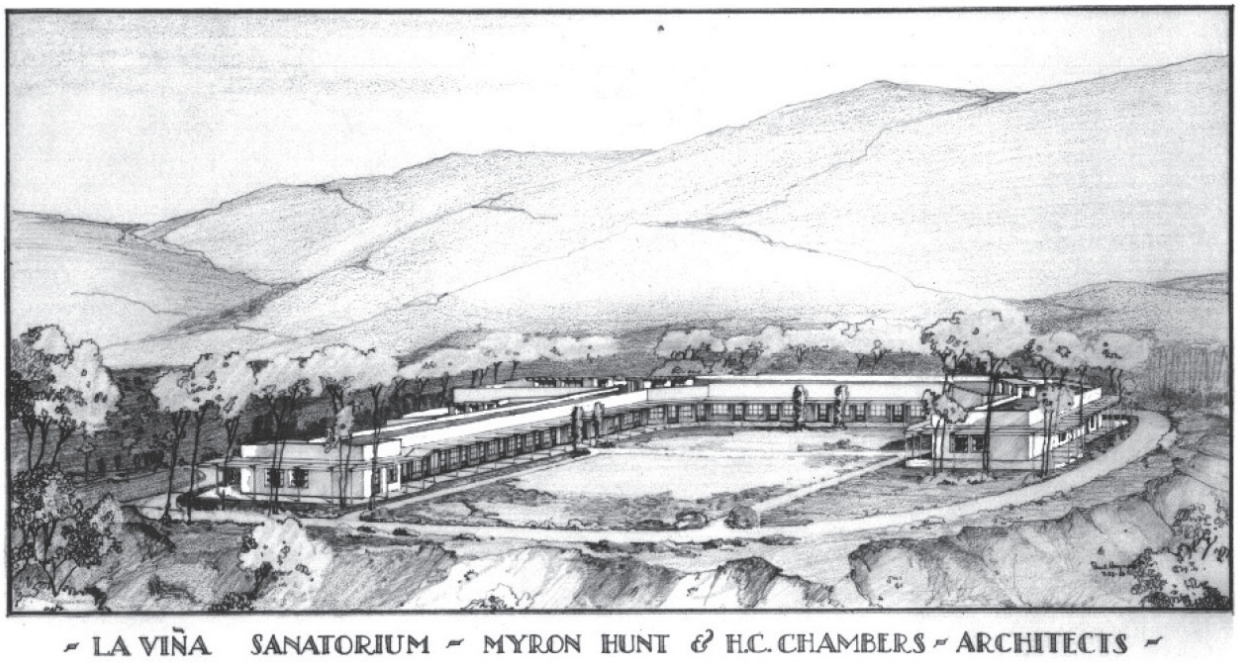
La Viña offered hope and healing. Its patients were often indigent or of limited means, but half the cost of care was covered by donations. In the beginning Dr. Stehman worked without pay.

In 1935 a fire swept through Las Flores Canyon and the sanatorium. Patient housing was all destroyed and only the administration building survived. Insurance paid $69,000 to rebuild; this was augmented by donations of $178,000 for a new 51-bed hospital. It was designed by renowned architect Myron Hunt, who also designed Altadena's Preventorium and Five Acres institutions.

The new sanatorium's single and double rooms were well-ventilated with porches facing an inner courtyard, and windows on both sides. It was among California's first structures designed for seismic safety.

1980's, the patient count dwindled as therapy had become home isolation with antibiotics. Eventually it merged with Pasadena's Huntington Hospital. A $20 million "La Viña Wing" opened, commemorating the earlier institution.

As for La Viña's 160 plus acres, they were sold to a developer. (The history of how it became the gated home community of the same name is well-told in Michele Zack's Altadena Between Wilderness and City.) Suffice to say, for more than a decade the property was the center of conflict that split Altadena into factions. Among controversial proposals was one by Scientologists to build an archive for the writings and documents of founder L. Ron Hubbard. Many Altadenans pushed for the chaparral land to be left as a trail-crossed nature preserve, but in the end, housing prevailed. In 1993 construction of the 272-home development began. Realtor



Rendering of La Viña's redesign after 1936 fire. Photo courtesy Paul Ayres.

From 1945, the property began housing a research center named for Charles Cook Hastings, who died of tuberculosis. His son, Charles Henry Hastings, opened a facility where 20 tubercular veterans were given free treatment and care. Just as an antibiotic cocktail was beginning to control TB, research there finally investigated effects of nutrition on recovery. This had long, but anecdotally, believed to be of import — and sparked the beginning of the health food industry. Science magazine reported, "Objective nutrition tests on the blood and bio-microscopic exam of the eyes, tongue and gums will be part of the routine exam of the subjects all of whom will receive a good standard sanatorium diet and one half being given food supplements. Progress of the disease in both groups will then be carefully compared."

After 18 years the research center merged with USC and the facility was shuttered. As TB treatment evolved, purpose-built facilities dedicated to it were no longer needed. By the

Steve Haussler recalls that they "scraped the ground bare with massive earth movers. The shock was mind-bending. But then they built houses and planted trees. Now it looks normal." Home sales began in 1998. "The economy had recovered from the recession. People started looking at Altadena and a bunch of Altadenans moved to La Viña, too," says Haussler.

As for Dr. Henry Stehman — the dedicated physician who helped contain the disease dubbed "Captain of Death" — he died at the age of 66 in 1918, and is buried in Mountain View Cemetery. His fellow-doctor and friend, Norman Bridge, wrote a published remembrance describing Dr. Stehman as "a great man whose career as citizen, physician, and philanthropist was unique… He was a man of vision and whatever he undertook he did. La Viña was his greatest work… It was his ambition to make a haven for at least a few of the many consumptives who walk the streets as long as they can – and walk in loneliness. And this he nobly did."

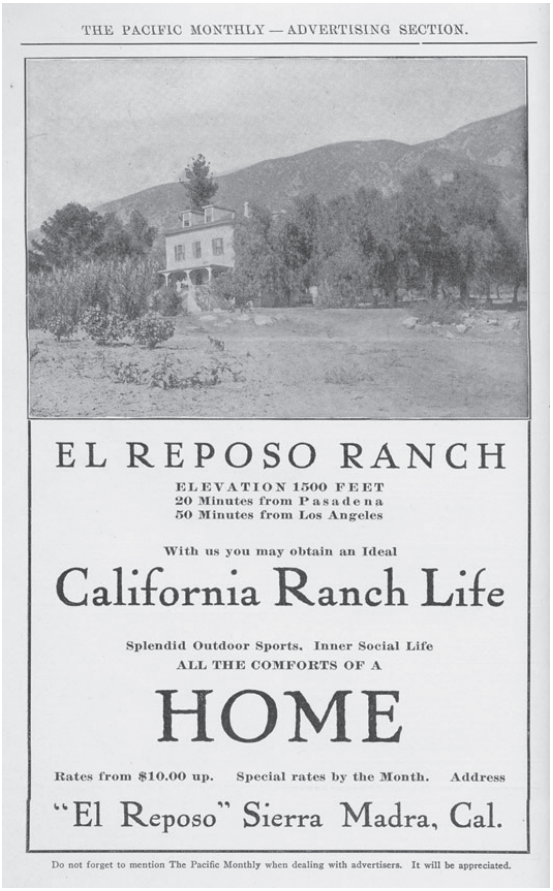
Altadena's Beginning as Mecca for the Ill

Continued from page 1

But for a full generation before, the most popular cure placed Altadena in its cross hairs. According to climatology precepts, the ideal situation for human health was a dry Mediterranean climate one to two thousand feet above sea level. Altadena: check! Early land advertisements lauded the perfection of our location "above the noxious fogs of Pasadena," adding that it was also not too high. Neither "miasma" (thought to be carried by fog) nor thin, freezing, night air to impede healing in the Highlands, as our area was known before 1887. Iowan John Woodbury borrowed the name Altadena that year from a defunct nursery for his new subdivision.

It is no surprise that health seekers of some means, education, and imagination landed here and in other settlements along the San Gabriel foothills from the 1880s through the 1920s. Altadena's specific attractions were many: rail lines up from Pasadena (one of Southern California's earliest, toniest settlements founded by cultured, tea-totaling, Midwesterners); the adjacent world-renowned health resort of Sierra Madre Villa; and neighboring Sierra Madre, the target of a sophisticated sales campaign aimed at the "well-off ill" of New and Old England. It didn't hurt that Altadena's land was a bit cheaper and more sparsely populated than its neighbors, while similarly situated against the gorgeous San Gabriel range.

While the health-seeker story has been often described, its legacy as a major force in California culture hasn't yet been fully appreciated. Our state is still associated with redemptive qualities — and the idea that its citizens are health-obsessed has only increased with time. In the 19th century this message was spread by real estate developers and gallons of ink in newspapers, books, publications, and personal letters. Altadena offers a fascinating example supporting the importance of health-seeking to regional identity, as well as to our community's very existence.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Ad doesn't mention this "ranch" catered to the ill.

At least seven institutions dedicated to treating respiratory illness and avoiding ill health in vulnerable children were established here between 1887 and the mid-1920s — despite a population of only a few hundred at the beginning and a few thousand by the end of the period. Several survived through the 1930s and a few, beyond. And more informal health camps and resorts, as well as what today would be called board and care homes, became rooted in Altadena and the foothills behind. La Viña Sanatorium, the most famous and long-lived, was a non-profit institution established by Dr. Stehman in 1911 to treat less well-heeled sufferers in the Progressive Era.

The fact that Altadena never incorporated as a city was key to health and land use here. Unlike Pasadena, we lacked the power of the ordinance to restrict health-related or other businesses. In the city to the south, a cough was enough to get one evicted from a boarding house; that is why Mountain View Cemetery, established to serve Pasadena, had to locate outside its limits. Levi Giddings, who arrived in the Highlands in 1875 and bought a few thousand acres, turned over some of his land very profitably to found the cemetery in 1881. Today it, along with the Mausoleum added in the 1920s, is Altadena's longest continually operating business (and still owned by the same family.) Giddings, along with even earlier arrivals including Benjamin Eaton (1865), developed water resources as soon as they came, making the arid wasteland directly north of Pasadena saleable. (see Altadena Heritage Newsletter, Fall/Winter 2020 pages 8-9.

The founder of Sierra Madre, N.C. Carter, purchased 845 acres at $20 per acre in 1881 from Lucky Baldwin, the same year brothers Fred and John Woodbury bought 937 acres of the future Altadena for $5 an acre from Pasadena. The two communities make interesting "comps." Their geography and water resources were similar, but they were marketed differently. Carter, from America's first planned industrial town of Lowell, Massachusetts, had recovered from TB in California, and was a born salesman who had found success dealing real estate for Lucky Baldwin. His brilliant sales campaign included an "amateur newspaper" mailed to prospective buyers in the Northeast, and aimed straight at the well-off sick. He personally escorted private train car loads of "lungers" (as TB sufferers were informally called) to Sierra Madre from New England every year, and targeted the same group in England, where he made deals with pulmonary specialists to refer certain patients to him for the "Sierra Madre Cure." He sold land in smaller plots at $40-$60 per acre.

Typical Altadena buyers, by comparison, were farmers and vintners (and a few millionaires) who paid less for larger tracts purchased from various sellers rather than a single slick developer. Growth this decade was more off-hand, but attracted a continuing trickle of investors. Southern California values began catching fire as the 1880s unfolded into a boom that peaked — but turned to bust, just as the Woodburys launched Altadena. Timing, as Lucky Baldwin often stated, was the key to success in real estate.

Major depression took up most of the 1890s, with a single bright exception in our area being the Mount Lowe Railway,

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opened in 1893. Altadena remained a backwater that thousands of rich tourists and health seekers saw from train windows on their way to Mount Lowe's fancy resorts. The most well-known of these who gave Altadena a second look was Zane Grey, who passed through as a dentist on his honeymoon in 1906, and moved here permanently in 1920 after becoming rich as an author who defined the west for the rest of the county.

When Sierra Madre incorporated in 1907, its first official acts were establishing a public health department and declaring a central zone covering most of the town that banned institutions "for the care and treatment of mental, contagious, or pulmonary diseases." Tent-houses, where less affluent health-seekers lived, were also prohibited, as city officials struggled to "dispel the illusion… that this city is nothing but a big consumptive camp." Successive ordinances passed by younger, healthier newcomers (with no nostalgia for the town's tubercular founders), restricted small board and care homes to two patients; hotels, restaurants, camps, and resorts posted signs barring entry to those with pulmonary disease; and newspaper editorials suggested that Sierra Madre's needy ill be taken care of at "Dr. Stehman's Sanitarium four miles to the west" — otherwise known as La Viña Sanitarium, in Altadena!

Gleason's Sanitarium, "Las Casitas" was Altadena's first, situated in the Meadows.

An absent/far flung county government, sparse population, and ideal location worked to make our community a mecca for the ill — especially as they were pushed out elsewhere. Sick people didn't appear to cause problems here, at least not ones that left records — perhaps because there were so few records! A.C Vroman, who moved to Pasadena for his health, did mention in his memoir a camp of indigent sufferers in a tent camp in the 1890s behind Altadena.

Many people recovered out west, and it is important to note that most never saw the inside of a formal institution because they were cared for by female family members at home. Health problems were driven deep underground in the 19th Century; the prevalent belief being these were best kept within the family; personal archives suggest almost every family was touched by this scourge. Those selling real estate certainly didn't stress numbers of ill people accumulating above and below ground in the west, and public death records didn't become standard until after 1900. To approximate the size of the "Health Rush" historians rely on obituaries, church and parish records, personal letters, memoirs, and on decoding advertisements: institutions and western "Ranches" catering to the sick often didn't mention this in print. Some scholars reckon that once the Transcontinental Railway made moving west a possibility for the health-compromised, half of its riders fit that description.

The 25% health-seeking share of western immigration could be conservative, and reflects all modes of transportation including covered wagon and sea travel. It is impossible to state an absolute number, because records don't exist. Scratch below the surface of Southern California in this period, however, and every indication is that the impact of illness was far larger than public presentation suggests — a clear example of history whose importance has been partially "erased."

Altadena and other unincorporated foothill communities differed from Pasadena and Sierra Madre because cities, not LA County, enacted restrictive health ordinances in this era. These new instruments of civic control most often targeted businesses before county zoning kicked in. Commercial activity here consisted of farms, vineyards, a graveyard, stable, transportation, and institutions such as Dr. Gleason's "Las Casitas Sanitarium" — and no entity appeared to regulate or record anything beyond land sales.

Adele Gleason was a female physician/entrepreneur who purchased land in foothills overlooking El Prieto Canyon in 1887, from Owen Brown, son of John Brown who led the raid on Harpers Ferry. Its remote location might have led to its failure, although in 1894 another doctor, O.S. Barnum, leased it. Today, it is a residence on Gravelia Street in The Meadows neighborhood; Owen himself

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Altadena's Beginning as Mecca for the Ill

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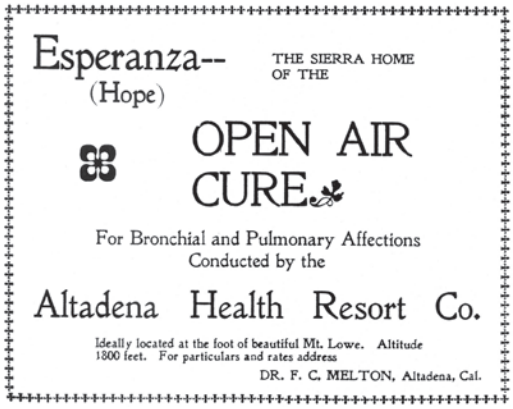
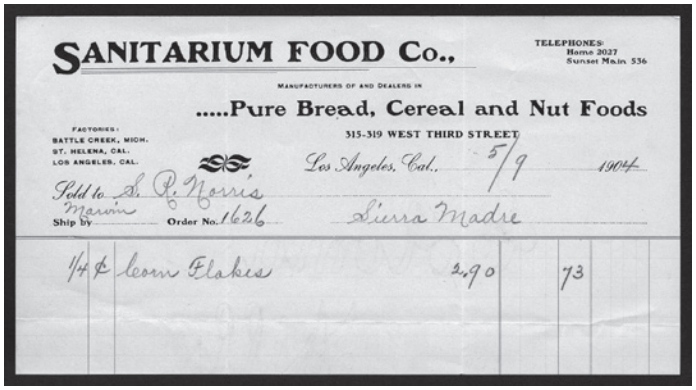
was buried close by after contracting a fatal chest cold walking home in the rain from a Pasadena temperance meeting in 1889.

Many other institutions came and went. Chaney Sanitarium perched above Millard Canyon north of Loma Alta; New York homoeopathist founder Edwin Chaney established a 14-cabin retreat around 1900 that did well, until rains eroded his hillside property and the nearby, much larger La Viña, opened as a non-profit institution in 1909. Esperanza (Hope) was built by Dr. Frederick Melton, an Austrian army veteran, east of Hill Avenue and north of Mendocino Street in 1902. He lived nearby on Holliston Avenue, and grew grapes, peaches, and Eucalyptus. Esperanza changed hands, but Dr. Melton remained in Altadena until his suicide in 1934, following the deaths of his wife and son.



Several businesses here catered to the ill, but perhaps the most forward-looking and successful of Altadena's institutions was Hygeia Hotel, named for the Greek goddess of health. It had its own stop on the Pacific Electric Railway (successor to the Mount Lowe Railway) taking passengers from Los Angeles to Altadena Junction at Lake and Calaveras, and on to Rubio Pavilion, Mt Lowe, and beyond. Established the same year as La Viña, Hygeia's founder Dr. W.J. Geirman took a muscular approach to restoring health. And because he didn't accept TB patients — but those suffering from asthma, alcoholism, nervous disorders, and generally in need of being "built up" — he enjoyed exceptional success. Sunshine, fresh air, vigorous daily exercise, cold baths, and showers (to boost the adrenal system) were his regime's bedrocks. Clients ate a diet of vegetables, fruits, nuts, and unlucky deer caught foraging hotel gardens — who enriched a popular venison stew. He planted the 28-acre bench of land east of the top of Lake Avenue with hundreds of trees, creating an idyllic setting of tents, cottages, and a two-story lodge that drew health seekers through WWII. Before Mount Lowe resort burned and permanently closed in 1936, it was one stop or a short hike from Hygeia to Rubio Pavilion, a popular dance hall, restaurant, and post office, with miles of trails and wooden stairways hung with Japanese lanterns clinging to fern-decked canyon walls. (There was more water in the canyon in those days.) No wonder many of Dr. Geirman's patients reported restored health after a stay in Altadena!



Health food became populer in the early 1900's.

The Progressive Era, a period of intense social activism and political reform, was in full swing from the turn of the century — and landed squarely in Altadena. Public health policies were a top concern, with reformers delving deeper than before to tackle root causes of social ills. The Preventorium, built south of Mariposa on the bank of the Arroyo in 1922, aimed to provide a healthy 24-hour-a-day environment for boys whose home lives were deemed to make them vulnerable to disease. Like Five Acres, (established by Los Angeles County in South Pasadena, and moved to Altadena in 1926), but privately funded, it focused on boys who were orphans or half-orphans with mothers unable to support them. And the Preventorium (later called the Pasadena Health School for Boys) and Five Acres, as well as La Viña, were all designed by famed architect Myron Hunt. In this era, beautiful architecture and environment were understood to have significant effects on human development — especially on children deprived of such advantages by circumstances of birth. Landscape architects Florence Yoch and Lucille Council designed Preventorium's grounds, retaining mature trees and creating an orchard and a garden where boys grew their own vegetables. They also raised goats, chickens, and rabbits, and attended school surrounded by long, low buildings with Spanish-tiled roofs. The Preventorium — today, The Sycamores — precipitated Altadena's first recorded public fight (unsuccessful) to stop a group home or institution from coming here. Today's residents are familiar with this tradition.

California's "health rush" was fading by the 1920s, as illness as a driver of immigration slowed dramatically, sanatoria began proliferating around the country, and infection rates dropped. The terrible Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-19, tragically taking the lives of young people very quickly, eclipsed slower-moving TB as public health fear #1. The epoch blended into the Progressive Era, Arts and Crafts Movement, and the Roaring 20s. Our health rush, however forgotten or overlooked, planted long-lived seeds: health food/concern with diet, various natural therapies, sleeping porches and other "close to nature" activities like camping, and life style elements still associated with our state. Health-seekers lived in, died in, or passed through our community. Many reinvented themselves as healthy people, and even many who died contributed to ideas and a cultural identity that survive today.

Extra summers on earth was the gift Altadena gave to many, and it seems fitting that we take a moment to appreciate all who sought redemption here, having lived through a pandemic that has taken the lives of more than 580,000 Americans and 73 Altadenans in just over a year.

Old Marengo Park Celebrates 15th Birthday

On Saturday, April 24, a group of 18 Altadena Heritage volunteers spruced up Old Marengo Park. Happy Birthday, little park! Amazing that this swatch of land, a public right of way created when Woodbury Road was widened and realigned in the late 1960s — celebrates its 15th birthday this year as a park.

For 40 years, the county maintained this piece of land by spraying Roundup on it once or twice a year — it was a true wasteland. But beginning in 2005 when the Altadena Watershed Committee formed (at first a committee of the Town Council) many groups, led by Altadena Foothills Conservancy and Altadena Heritage, began transforming it with a "City Make Over" grant from Metropolitan Water Distict. Our then - Supervisor Mike Antonovich chipped in, as did Pasadena Water and Power, which provided water to the property at the very end of its water district. Work was ongoing between 2006 and 2007, but once complete, Altadena Heritage took over its maintenance with help from the LA County's Public Works.

Old Marengo Park has beautified this part of Altadena along Woodbury Corridor, sparked the interest that led to the redesign and planting of Woodbury median, and finally, to adding more street trees along this part of Altadena's boundary with Pasadena. It is now indeed a lovely gateway into our community.

Volunteers assembled on a Saturday morning in April for a park clean-up and weeding party. Old Marengo Park was designed in 2005 by Mark Goldschmidt of Altadena Heritage. Several groups, individuals, and Supervisor Mike Antonovich contributed to building it.

Altadena Heritage
730 E. Altadena Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001-2351

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Golden Poppy Celebration

Sunday May 23 at 4pm

Join us on Sunday May 23 at 4pm for the second annual Virtual (and hopefully last virtual ever) Golden Poppy Awards.

The Golden Poppies have been Altadena Heritage's way of celebrating those gardens that "give to the street" over the last 17 years!

We have selected four of the best front yards in Altadena to receive the prestigious Altadena Heritage Golden Poppy Award plaque. Come and see the winning gardens in full color and meet the lucky winners.

BECOME A MEMBER

Choose one:

❑ New member ❑ Renewing member

Type of membership:

❑ $25: Individual ❑ $35: Household ❑ $30: Senior Household

❑ $15: Senior individual (65 and over) ❑ $100: Patron/Business

Are you interested in volunteering?

❑ Yes! Contact me. ❑ Not at this time.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Make check payable to **Altadena Heritage** and mail to:

730 E. Altadena Dr., Altadena, CA 91001

Join online at www.altadenaheritage.org