

Historic Sites in the Cañada Crescenta Valley

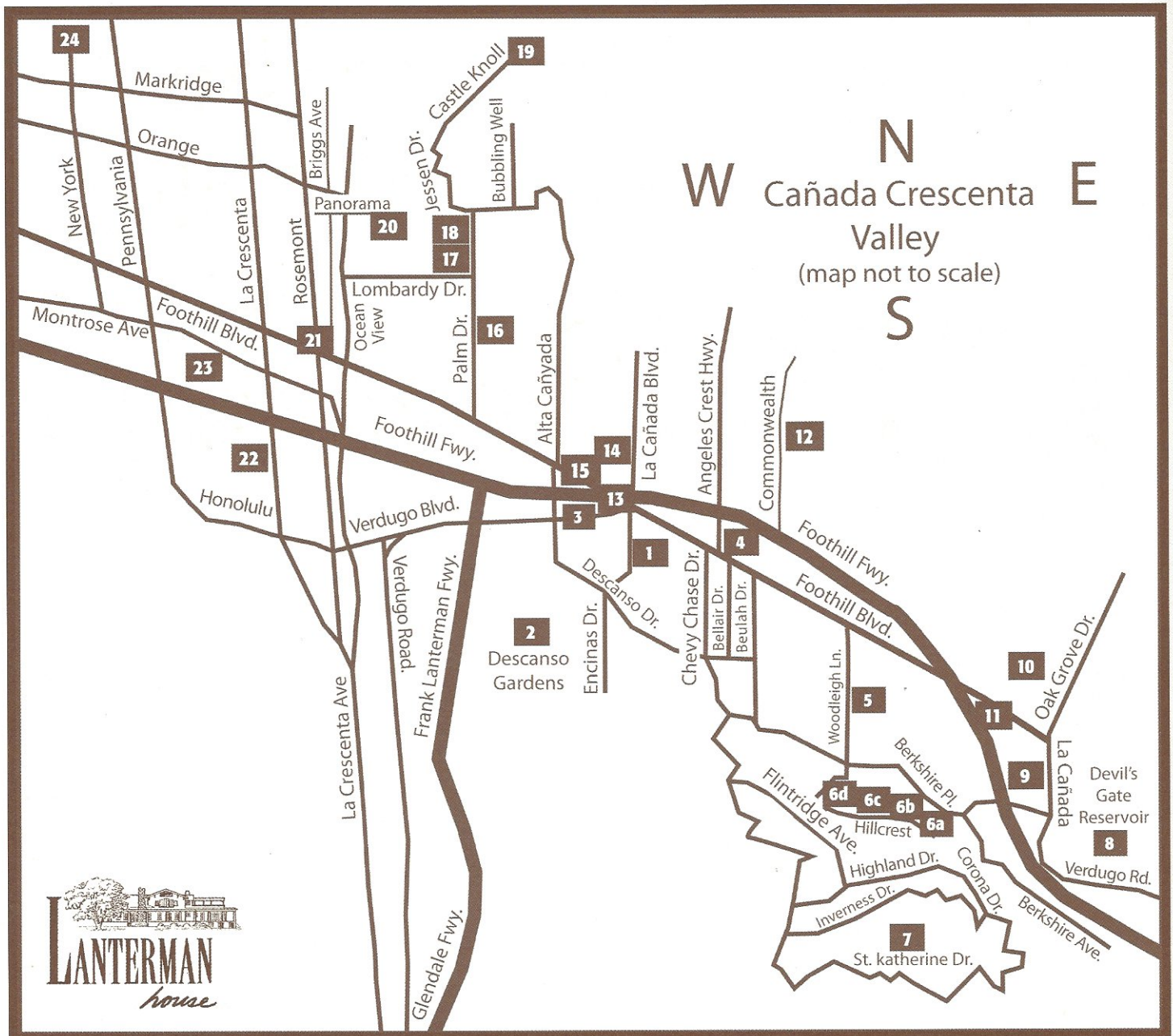


This brochure is meant to serve as an introduction to the cultural heritage of the Cañada Crescenta Valley in its historic buildings and sites. It is by no means a complete guide, but rather, emphasizes buildings that remain largely unchanged and are available for viewing by the public. Due to the distances between sites, we recommend using this brochure as a self-guided driving tour. Please do remember that some of these buildings are residences and the privacy of the owners must be respected. Other buildings, houses, offices, and schools continue to serve their original purpose as private clubs or churches. Both the Hospitality House at Descanso Gardens and the Lanterman House are open for public tours.



*Lanterman Historical Museum Foundation
4420 Encinas Drive
La Cañada Flintridge, CA 91011*

Have fun history hunting!



1 Lanterman House

4420 Encinas Drive

Completed in 1915, "El Retiro", as it was known, was built by the second generation of La Cañada's founding family, the Lantermans. Dr. Roy Lanterman commissioned architect A. L. Haley to design a fireproof bungalow of reinforced concrete for his family. The house sits on 1.4 acres of restored lawns, gardens and oak groves and comprises 11,250 square feet. There are many arts and crafts elements to the U-shaped house, including 32 pairs of french doors, which provide natural light and heat and make all rooms accessible to the interior patio and trellis-shaded perimeter walkway. The entire second floor is devoted to a ballroom, and the interior of the house retains its original furnishings and is elaborately decorated with plant and flower motifs, represented in painted ornament, wallpapers and light fixtures.



2 Hospitality House

at Descanso Gardens
(former Boddy House)
1418 Descanso Drive

The Hospitality House was built in 1938 for \$140,000 by Manchester and Bea Boddy. The Boddys cleared the land and built a luxurious two-story mansion with 22 rooms. This beautiful house was designed by architect J. E. Donena of Beverly Hills. The Hospitality House overlooks 25 acres of live oak forest and a driveway lined in camellias. Today, the Descanso Gardens Guild office resides upstairs. Downstairs is open to the public.

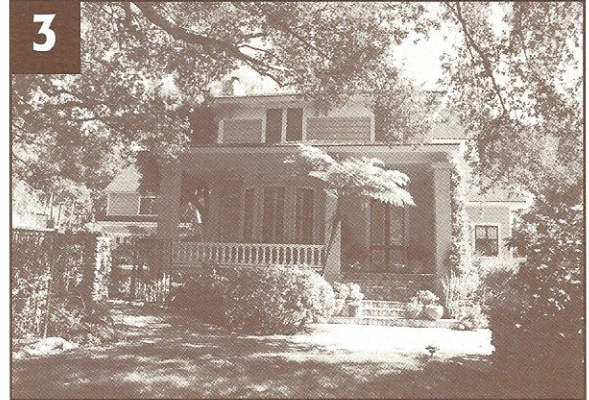


3 Homewood

1322 Verdugo Blvd.

This is a private residence that may be viewed only from the street.

This home was built around 1878 by Jacob L. Lanterman, a former dentist and patriarch of the family that founded La Cañada. He chose a scenic oak-shaded spot on which to build a Victorian-style house for himself, his wife Ammoretta, and their three children, Frank, Stella, and Roy. Homewood would remain under family ownership for almost seventy years. The original 100 acres of surrounding orange groves were reduced to 1 and 1/2 acres by the time of its sale in 1945. The rear half of the house is said to be the oldest section; the front was added in the 1890s and is virtually intact from that time. Its architecture was no doubt inspired by the types of residences the Lanterman family was used to in Michigan.



4 Totta Garage

964 Foothill Blvd.

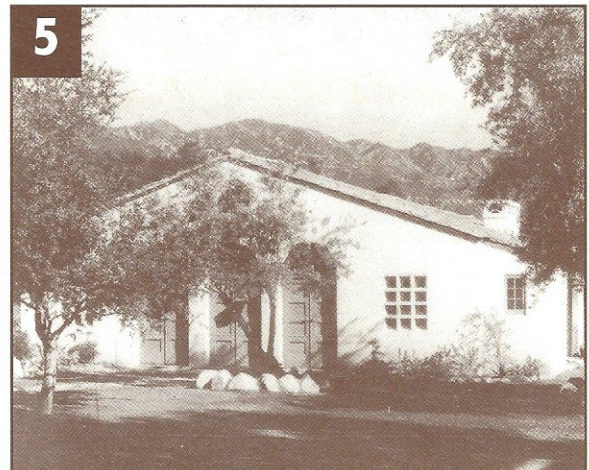
The Totta Garage was built in 1917. It was originally called the Flintridge Garage and was owned by Senator Flint, developer of Flintridge. He used it as a parking garage and livery stable. Chauffeured tours of the model homes in Flintridge left from this garage and the sign on the roof pointed the way. Flint's chauffeur, Whitey Womack, built race cars in the building in the 1920s.



5 Thursday Club

4440 Woodleigh Lane

The La Cañada Thursday Club, a beautiful Spanish Colonial Revival building was constructed in 1926, to house the first women's club in the La Cañada Valley. The clubhouse, designed by Robert Murray, was built and furnished for a cost of \$9,889.09 and was the first permanent site for the Thursday Club, which had been founded in 1912 by Mrs. Jesse Knight. Previously, the club had met at members' homes.



6 a-d Flintridge Residences

Hillcrest Avenue

These are private residences that may be viewed only from the street.

After Frank Flint paved the way by building his own large home (now demolished) in Flintridge in 1911, he encouraged other wealthy Los Angeles and Pasadena businessmen to do the same. Senator Flint hired well-known architects, like Paul R. Williams and Roy Kieffer, to design model homes in a variety of styles for his Flintridge Company. Other residences were custom-designed for their owners. Hillcrest Avenue has some excellent examples of these types of homes.

6a Starting at the upper end of Hillcrest at its junction with Alta Vista Drive is the magnificent 1928 Mediterranean estate of insurance executive J. W. Walt built at 3972 Alta Vista by the L.G. Scherer Company.

6b Proceeding down the hill, there is the beautiful Spanish Colonial Revival home at 717 Hillcrest designed by pioneer architect John Winford Byers for lumber magnate Hunter Savidge Robbins in 1927.

6c The palatial 10,000-square-foot Moorish-influenced residence at 739 was designed for mining engineer George Hanson by Henry Harwood Hewitt in 1922.

6d At the bottom of the hill at 757 Hillcrest Ave is a Colonial Revival home designed in 1918 by famed architect Myron Hunt for attorney Lewellyn Jutten, an associate of Mr. Flint. 717, 739 and 757 have all served as Pasadena Showcase Houses for the Arts.



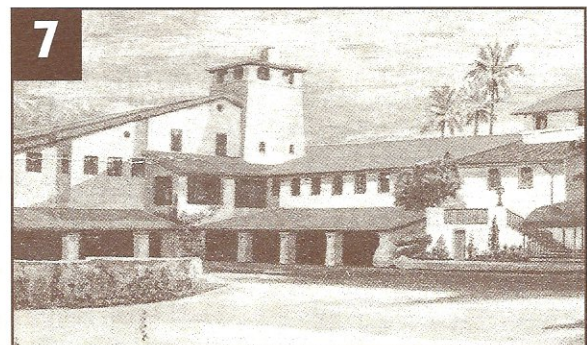
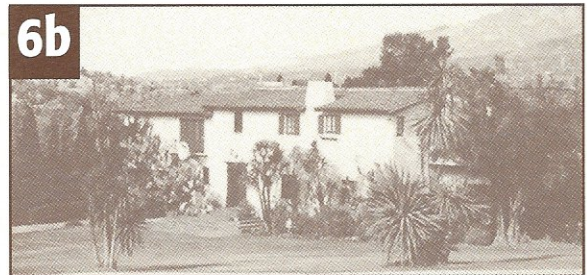
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7 Flintridge Biltmore Hotel

(now Sacred Heart)

440 St. Katherine Dr.

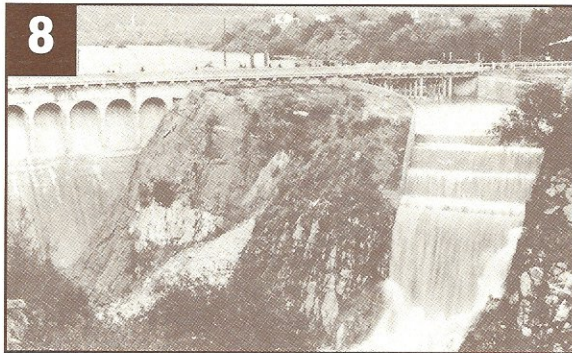
The Flintridge Hotel was built in 1927, atop the highest peak in the San Rafael hills, as the dream of Senator Frank Flint. The large Spanish Colonial building was designed by Myron Hunt and H.C. Chambers as a resort hotel surrounded by a nine-hole golf course, tennis courts, an outdoor swimming pool and 30 miles of bridle paths. There was even a telescope placed in the tower room so guests could enjoy views of the Arroyo, Pasadena, the Angeles Crest range and even Catalina Island. The Depression and the isolation of the hotel caused its failure in 1929, and in 1930, it became the Flintridge Academy for Girls (now Flintridge Sacred Heart High School).



8 Devil's Gate Dam

La Cañada Verdugo Dr., Pasadena

Devil's Gate Dam was built in 1922 across the Arroyo Seco to capture water intended to supply the City of Pasadena. The photograph depicts an unusual scene of water in the dam spillway.

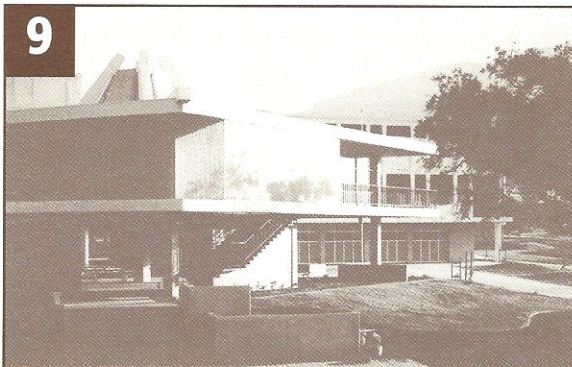


9 La Cañada High School

(former golf greens, Skunk Hollow)

4463 Oak Grove Dr.

The site of what was once the greens for Flintridge Country Club. The locals fondly called the area of and surrounding La Cañada High School "Skunk Hollow" due to the large population of skunks. In 1963, La Cañada High School was opened for local students.



10 The Flintridge Riding Club

4625 Oak Grove Dr.

The oldest and only remaining family riding club in the Los Angeles area, the Flintridge Riding Club was organized in 1922. Frank Flint sold ten acres of oak-studded land along the edge of the Arroyo to the founders of the Club. The first Children's Horse Show was held that same year, establishing it as America's oldest horse show for children. The Club was incorporated in 1923, and its first president was Reginald D. Johnson, an architect who designed and built the Spanish-style clubhouse that is viewable inside the driveway entrance.



11 Flintridge Country Club

(now St. Francis High School)

200 Foothill Blvd.

This Mexican hacienda, designed by Myron Hunt and H.C. Chambers, was built in 1921, to serve as the country club for the affluent home buyers moving into the 1,700 acres south of Foothill Boulevard being subdivided and developed by former U.S. Senator Frank P. Flint. The original building still exists as part of St. Francis High School.



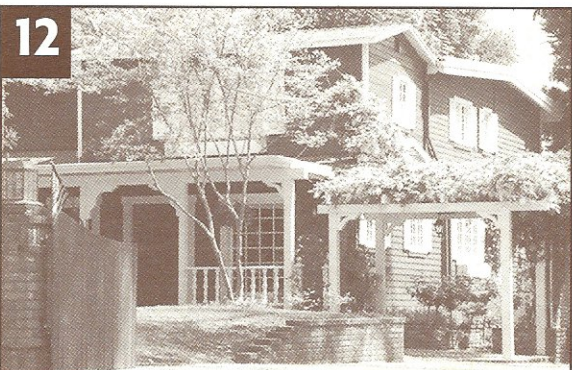
12 The Cooper House

4832 Commonwealth Ave.

This is a private residence that may be viewed only from the street.

This house was built in 1911 by father and son Howard and Robert Cooper. The Coopers would establish one of La Cañada's premier construction firms. In 1887, Howard L. Cooper left his native Massachusetts with his wife Lucy and settled in La Cañada, opening one of the community's first general stores. Howard Cooper subdivided a parcel off the north end of his property along Commonwealth and helped his son Robert construct this house.

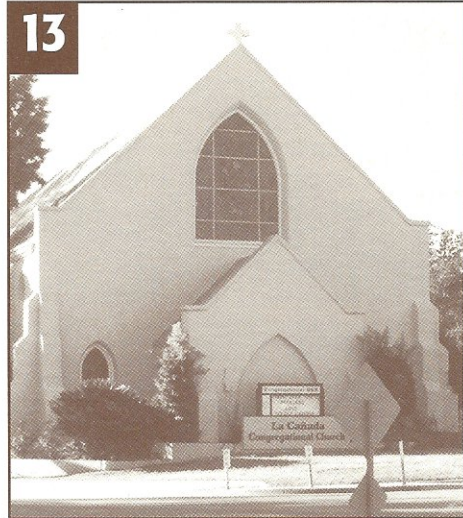
Robert Cooper's original home was basically a one-story simple farmhouse with a sleeping porch on the second level. Over the years, it has been enlarged with three bedrooms now occupying the second story.



13 Church of the Lighted Window

1200 Foothill Blvd.

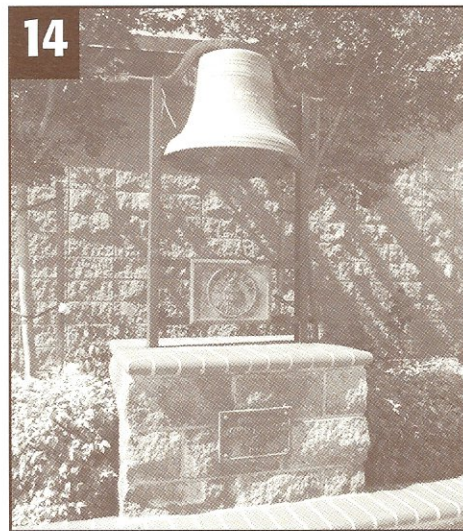
The Church of the Lighted Window, La Cañada Valley's first church, was commissioned in 1897, as a one-story frame building located on the present church grounds. After the church's 1898 dedication, it became the center of the community's activities, including the meeting place of the first Boy Scout Troop in the area. In 1924 the present sanctuary building was dedicated and in 1969, the church, also known as the La Cañada Congregational Church, was declared a Historic California Landmark. Notice the beautiful stained glass windows in the sanctuary which were installed in 1925.



14 Bell at La Cañada Elementary

(site of early school)
4540 Encinas Drive

The bell that once rang in the steeple of La Cañada School at the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century is now displayed at La Cañada Elementary School. The original site of the school is in the back corner of what is now Memorial Park. One story about the bell is that the small crack was caused by the shipping process in the 1890s, similar to the Liberty Bell.



15 Old Town

1400 Block of Foothill Boulevard

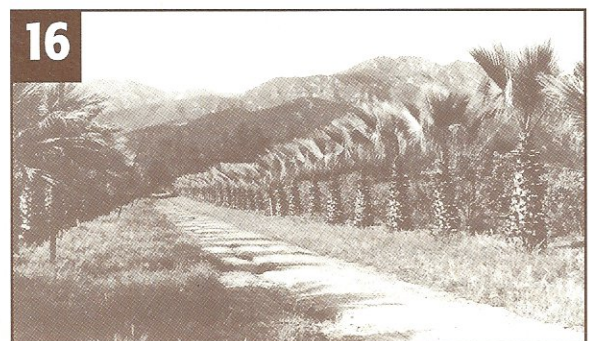
This commercial block on Foothill Boulevard was probably built in the mid-1910s. It backs up to some of the oldest structures in La Cañada Flintridge. The buildings housed the La Cañada Garage and the Huntington Iron Works. The Huntington family lived in a house on Bellview and owned the commercial buildings. James Huntington patented a "barbeque pot" in 1936, which became all the rage in Southern California and were manufactured through the early 1960s. These buildings are now owned by Zentmyer Development, whose offices are housed in the far western building.



16 Palm Trees

(on Palm Drive)

The large palm trees that presently line Palm Drive are in fact historical. These palms were planted in the teens as a guide to the Dunham house. What is now known as Palm Drive was the driveway to this large residence now gone. The trees were thought to be a nuisance by many of the other locals due to their natural housing ability for vermin.



17 Moses Residence

4725 Palm Drive

This is a private residence that may be viewed only from the street.

This house was built in 1890 by Ralph G. Moses. This was originally a two room house, with a lean-to kitchen, on the front of a large orange orchard. The property is unique because the house has stayed under family ownership since it was built. It has had five consecutive generations live in the house. On the property there still exist two of the original Naval orange trees.

18 Viewpoint

5039 Palm Dr.

This was nothing more than a vacant eighteen-acre lot until geologist Bert Chester Morrison purchased the property in 1923 and began construction on what would become one of the cornerstones of La Cañada history. In 1924, an ad ran in the Los Angeles Times describing the property as a site of picturesque beauty with rare shrubs, flowers, fruit orchards, and a vineyard, velvet lawns and an aviary containing 400 exotic birds. In addition, there were stables, a swimming pool, a gardener's cottage with a two-car garage attached, and three servant houses. The identities of the architect and builder of the house remain unknown. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the house was rented out to different tenants. The La Cañada Unified School District took ownership of the property and later built Palm Crest Elementary School on the southerly side. The interior of the house has a V-shaped floor-plan; one wing has the dining room and kitchen, the opposite has two guest rooms and a bathroom. The primary feature of the living room is the massive Batchelder-tile fireplace which is amazingly intact and a reminder of the high style this house once exemplified.

19 Strong (Wallace) Castle

5455 Castle Knoll Road

This is a private residence that may be viewed only from the street.

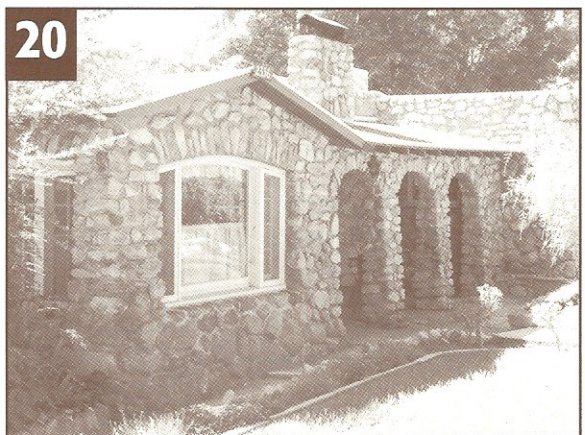
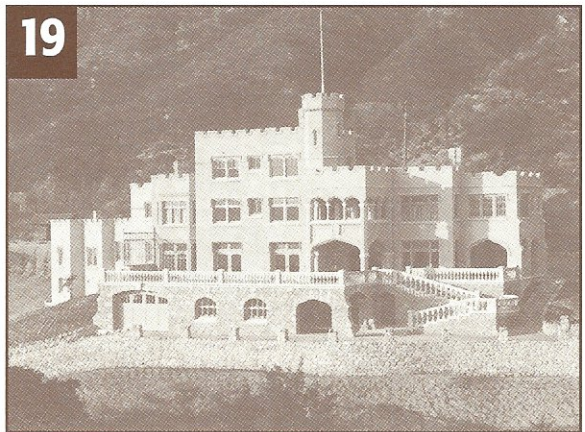
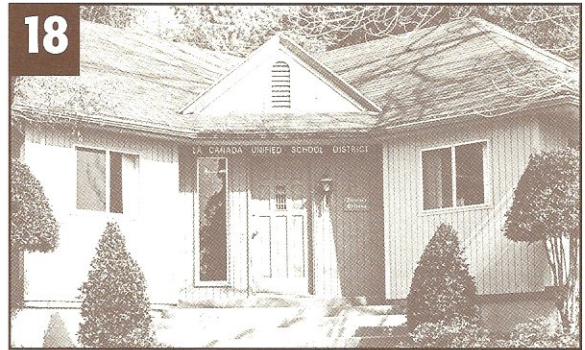
The Wallace Castle was built in 1911 by Lt. Governor Wallace. The castle, designed by Arthur Benton, has imported English Oak woodwork, Italian marble fireplaces and dining room floors and hand sculpted designs of flora and fauna decorating the castle facade. The castle has a good view of the valley, mountains, twinkling city lights, and on a clear day, a good view of Catalina Island. In the front yard there is a waterfall and pond.

20 The Smith House

2336 Panorama Dr.

This is a private residence that may be viewed only from the street.

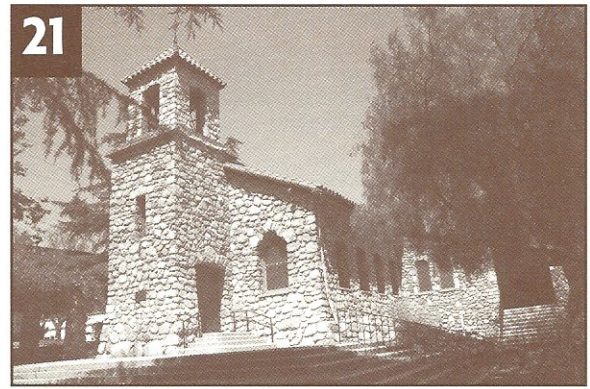
This is a remarkably unchanged stone house constructed for Sam C. Smith by an unknown builder in 1926. Early settlers in the Cañada Crescenta Valley were dismayed that what looked like arable soil was actually a thin veneer over vast quantities of boulders, washed down from the mountains over geologic time. Before they could plant crops, these new residents had to dig out thousands of rocks. They were at first seen as nuisances, but it was soon discovered they could be used as plentiful, free and durable building material for houses, pathways, and retaining walls. A number of stone houses and walls can be found in "Rock Crescenta" (as it was nicknamed), but this property is one of the best-preserved. Note the artistry of the stonemason as he carefully selected and placed the stones to create even wall surfaces. The house contains a magnificent stone fireplace.



21 St. Luke's of the Mountains Episcopal Church

2563 Foothill Blvd.

Built in 1924, designed by Seymour Thomas in association with Harry Peters, St. Luke's was described by architectural historians David Gebhard and Robert Winter as "an extremely picturesque boulder church". St. Luke's is a testament to the stonemason's art. Seymour Thomas, a well-known plein-air artist, set up his easel across the street from the then-vacant site in the early 1920s and created his vision of what the church should look like. Constructed of natural stone from the valley, it is reminiscent of a woodlands church in northern Europe. It is considered to be an architectural centerpiece of the Cañada Crescenta Valley. Next door is the original Fire Station Number 19, built in 1930. It is now used by the church as a youth house.

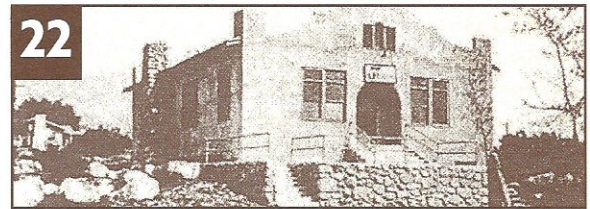


22 Verdugo Hills American Legion Post 288 Memorial Hall

4011 La Crescenta Ave.

(Built at the corner of Rosemont and Fairway in 1925)

To look at this unassuming little stucco building now, one can hardly imagine the devastation that was wrought on it and its inhabitants at its original location on that hellish night in 1933/34. A forest fire had swept through the mountains in November 1933 and the bare soil could not absorb the 13 inches of rain that fell during a 24-hour period the following New Year's Eve. Massive amounts of water, carrying giant boulders, rocks and debris, crashed down from the higher slopes, washing away structures, cars, and people in its path which stretched south to the Verdugo Wash. The official death toll in Montrose and La Crescenta was 38, with 400 homes demolished and \$5 million in damage incurred. The American Legion Hall was said to be "the most conspicuous casualty of the flood" where 25 people had taken refuge, only to be swept away as the waters tore a hole in the back wall and continued out the front. Twelve people lost their lives in the hall. The Hall was moved and rebuilt at its current location after the flood, its front facade now facing east rather than south.



23 La Crescenta Presbyterian Church

2902 Montrose Ave.

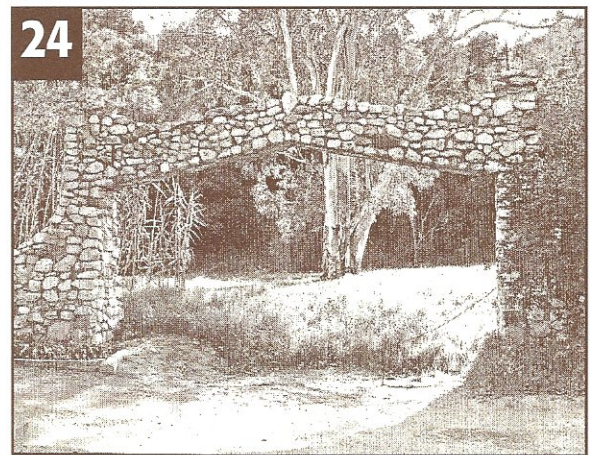
The La Crescenta Presbyterian Church is a Spanish-style building constructed in 1923. The tower and cross are a later addition. Organized by Dr. Benjamin Briggs, founder of La Crescenta, with 8 original members, the group was officially recognized by the Los Angeles Presbytery in 1885. In the congregation's early years they shared facilities with the elementary school, as did the Episcopalians that later built St. Luke's.



24 The Mountain Oaks Resort

(At the end of New York Ave.)

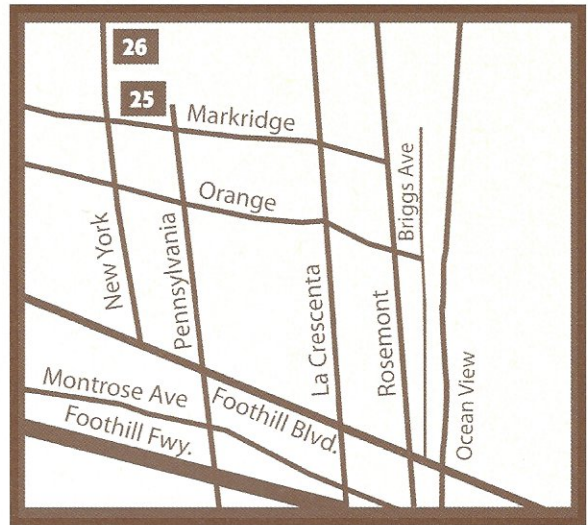
This cozy getaway was developed in the 1920s by Emmitt and Helen Kadtetz on 33 acres of wooded hillside and was envisioned as a Utopian type of resort. The land was divided up into 400 small lots, an ideal size on which to pitch a tent or build a summer cottage, connected by winding lanes bordered with cobblestone walls. Many of these walls and the resort's rock entry arch still exist. Further up the hill were the public swimming pool and a two-story lodge. The abandoned swimming pool space with locker rooms to each side and grandstands are mostly intact. The lodge, which probably had functioned as a speak-easy in the 1920s, had a dancefloor and a mezzanine with bedrooms. The lodge was demolished in the 1960s; however, the rock walls, entry steps, terrace and basement, as well as two surviving fireplaces and chimneys remain. Today Mountain Oaks is the site of many ruins and a few surviving residences.



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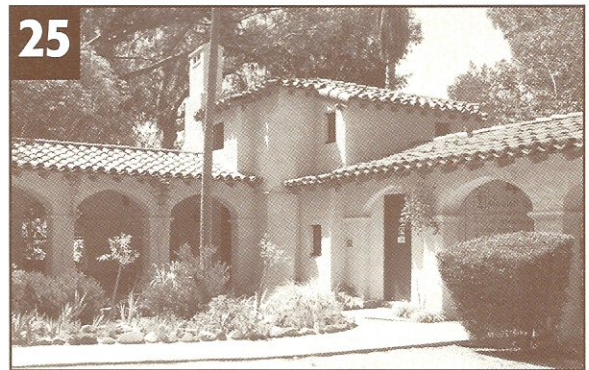
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25 Ananda Ashrama

5301 Pennsylvania Avenue

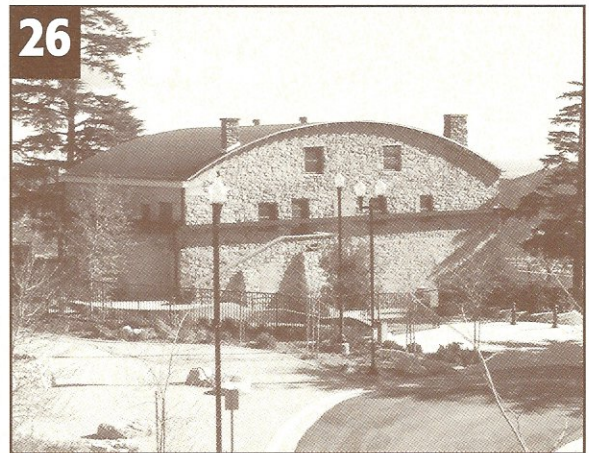
La Crescenta is home to one of two American Ashrams founded by Indian mystic and poet Swami Paramananda. The Ananda Ashrama was founded in 1923, as an extension of the Vedanta Centre in Boston. The Ashram covers 120 acres of hillsides, canyons and meadows. The trees, gardens, and rock-lined pathways provide a peaceful retreat for spiritual study and prayer. The Ashrama is a non-sectarian place of worship dedicated to every religion.



26 Le Mesnager Barn

3428 Markridge Road

Le Mesnager Barn is a stone barn perched high above the valley, built in 1911 by George Le Mesnager, a French patriot, to store and process grapes from his vineyards in the Sparr Heights area. These grapes supplied his "Old Hermitage Vineyards" winery in downtown Los Angeles. In 1933, prohibition was repealed and a winemaking operation once again began in the barn. In 1968, the property was sold to a developer who intended to construct homes on the site. The City of Glendale purchased the site in 1988, and renamed it Deukmejian Wilderness Park.



NOTE: Research and text for *Historic Sites in the Cañada Crescenta Valley* by Krishna Rajagopalan and Tim Gregory



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