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The History of the Kinneloa Ranch

Kinneloa Ranch founder, Abbot Kinney, was a remarkable person. An astute businessman, cultured and well educated, he traveled the world before deciding that Southern California was the paradise he sought, in which to settle and make his home. He would personally guide much of Los Angeles and surrounding community development from the time of his arrival in 1880 until his death in 1920. His most famous accomplishment was the planning and building of his city by the sea, Venice. Space does not permit an in-depth account of Kinney's life and his many important contributions. If you want to know more about him, we recommend Elayne



Alexander's comprehensive book *Abbot Kinney's Venice of America*, probably the authority on the subject.

Elayne has graciously allowed us to reprint the following paragraphs from her book relating to Kinney's discovery and purchase of the area he called Kinneloa.

"I immediately bought a train ticket and hurried south to Los Angeles. It was raining when I arrived and the streets were one mass of mud. Getting off the train at the old River Station, I didn't like either the look or the smell of things, for that mud stank. I went up to one of the hotels, but there was nothing pleasing about that place, so I hired a carriage to drive out to East Pasadena. How that mud on the old adobe road stuck to our wheels! In due time we arrived to be met with the cheering intelligence that there wasn't a room in the house. That was all very well but I was there to stay so they put me in the parlor where I remained three days."

This establishment was the Sierra Madre Villa Hotel, owned by very distant relatives, William C. Cogswell and his son-in-law, William Porter Rhoades. Together, the hotel and outlying cottages contained 54 rooms, including a 200-foot glassed-in veranda and a billiard hall. In the dry air Kinney slept as never before, and when he awakened the following morning with his asthma totally relieved, he eagerly explored the district. The air was crisp and pure, the settlement sparse and he knew that he had found the place with

the perfect climate. He hurried back to the hotel with his black valet, Sam, and set up a large two-room tent in the eucalyptus grove. He outfitted the canvas rooms with beautiful rugs and furniture and there the world traveler stayed until he had fully explored the surroundings.

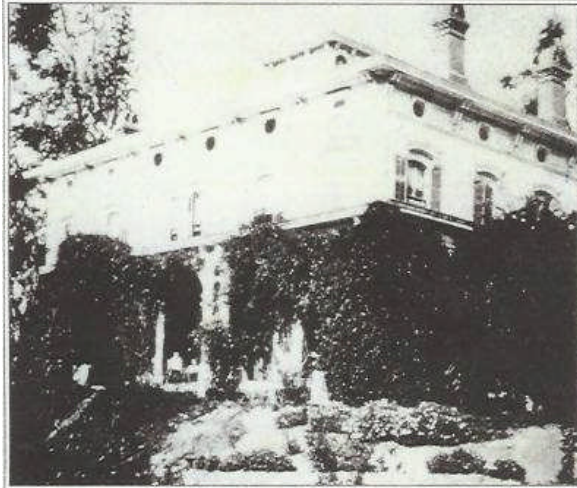
His friend, author Helen Hunt Jackson, later wrote a children's book about Abbot Kinney and his settling near the Sierra Madre Villa Hotel. She called him "George Connor" in "The Hunter Cats of Connorloa," and many facts from Kinney's life in California are detailed in the book. According to Mrs. Jackson, "George Connor" rode a horse day after day, looking at orchards and vineyards, and began to think he should own some too. He went up and down along the base of the foothills searching for just the right property. "Connor" finally found what he was looking for at the top of a mesa, grown thick with chaparral and with no road leading to it. He pictured a great white house on the plateau and knew that from the windows one would be able to see all over the valley and 30 miles distant to the sea.

Kinney later called the area "the mecca of all my hopes." The clean air made his asthma tolerable and he felt at peace in the warm California sunshine. He purchased 550 acres of land in the spring of 1880, which comprised a mesa on which to build his house with a sizeable sloping field in front of it. The hill had previously been occupied by a hermit

Abbot Kinney in his later years.

KINNELOA RANCH... "The mecca of all my hopes,"

Abbot Kinney



Kinney's imposing two-story home was built in the Italianate style of Victorian architecture. Suitably grand for the needs of a gentleman, farmer, it was particularly remarkable considering its remote location.

The history of Kinneloa Ranch continued from page one...

bee-rancher. Two days after Kinney acquired the property, men were at work clearing the brush, bridging ravines, and grading for a road on the east side of Eaton Wash. By tunneling into the base of the mountainside, they transformed an insignificant water source into a splendid irrigation system. Pipes were laid and a 35-foot-deep reservoir with a 500,000 gallon capacity was constructed, as well as a storage reservoir with a four million gallon capacity. An orchard of 6,000 citrus and 1,500 deciduous trees took shape on the slopes along with a vineyard of 20,000 grape vines, most of the seedless Sultana variety. Later, there would be dates and blood (red flesh) oranges for which Mr. Kinney would become well known by citrus growers all over California.

A commodious two-story home was built with four large rooms upstairs and four downstairs, surmounted by a tower. A kitchen ran along the back. It was dubbed "Kinneloa," meaning "Kinney's Hill" in Hawaiian. "The Hunter Cats of Connorloa" describes "Connor's" home as being an old-fashioned square house with a wide hall

running through the center. A library and dining room were situated on the east side, while on the west were a parlor and large billiard room with a kitchen running along the rear. Upstairs were four large bedrooms, but there were no servant quarters in the house. Only Chinese were employed as servants and laborers, and a long, low wooden building had been erected farther up the hill. "Mr. Connor" called it the "Chinese Quarter." The only servant to live in the main house was his black valet.

The book goes on to tell about the seventeen cats that lived at the ranch and were kept just a little hungry in order to free the area of gophers, rabbits and moles. "Mr. Connor" was given the first cat by a local Hispanic lady so he named the feline "Mexican," and from "Mexican" the rest of his pack was descended. "Connor's" ranch was cleared of all pests by the cats and this was true of Kinneloa ranch as well.

After 1886, though Abbot Kinney continued to spend a portion of the year at Kinneloa and maintained an active interest in his extensive orange growing operation, most of his attention was directed toward Venice.

AFTER 1912

Abbot Kinney's son Innes took over the day-to-day management of the ranch. Innes, his wife Helen, and their two children established residence in the large ranch house. Their son, Kendrick, was born here in 1916. The only heat in the big house came from eight fireplaces. A nursemaid used hot water bottles to keep baby Kendrick warm. He has scars to prove that the bottles were too hot. Innes continued to manage the ranch after Abbot's death in 1920 until 1928 when the 506-acre property was sold to brothers Lloyd E. and Arthur Mills Lockhart.

THE LOCKHARTS

The Lockharts had been very successful in the oil business. Lloyd commissioned noted Los Angeles architect Paul Williams to design a Mediterranean style mansion which was completed in 1931. Arthur built the magnificent place on Kinneloa Mesa at the end of Doyne Road. The story goes that an argument and subsequent falling out between the brothers caused the division of the ranch where Kinneloa Mesa Road runs into Country Lane; Lloyd retained the property above the gate and Arthur the property below it.

The fence across the road has been there ever since.

Sadly the Arthur M. Lockhart mansion fell on hard times many years ago. It had been a school and later a home for mentally ill (it has been referred to as The Funny Farm) and was destroyed in the October 27, 1993 fire.



The adobe bake oven

Lloyd and Mildred Lockhart were divorced in 1937. Mrs. Lockhart kept the new house and 12 acres (what we now call Kinneloa Ranch) in the divorce settlement. She continued to live there with her son John and built a house nearby for her mother, Mrs. John J. Hiner.

At the time of the 1937 flood that wiped out Pasadena Glen, Mildred Lockhart took in Glen residents during the night and put them up for several days. There was a trail from the Glen to the Lockhart home.

This property was bought from the Lockharts by Mervin and Lissa Grizzle in 1950 and was occupied by them and their four children, John, Ann, Nancy and Carol. Lissa lived there until her death on February 5, 1994.

By 1939 the once grand Kinney house was not occupied and badly in need of repair. It had continued for a while as the residence of Lockhart's ranch manager. At this time Lloyd Lockhart's son Ross supervised the demolition of the old house as well as the old Kinney barn. James

Morgan (son of Hugh and Pauline) was hired in the summer of either 1939 or 1940 to tear out and dump the massive cement foundation. Today, all that remains of the original Kinney homesite is an adobe beehive shaped bake oven.



The Lockhart house and grounds in the 1930's.

END OF AN ERA

In the late 1930's or early 1940's, Mrs. Lockhart, having no near neighbors and feeling isolated, sold three lots off the main road leading to her house (now Villa Heights Road). These were purchased by Spencer and Agnes Atkinson, Hugh and Pauline Morgan, and Reginald and Cecil Coldwell. Another home site was sold later to Guy and Lucia Edwards.

Guy Edwards was a geologist and mining

engineer. Lucia Edwards had a degree in landscape engineering and design. She designed the Kinneloa Ranch gate. Evelyn Nation, wife of Earl Nation, oversaw the gate's construction. Robert Knapp obtained the iron work from Caltech, and the masonry was done by a man who had worked for the Nations. The gate was completed in about 1950.

The neighborhoods of Kinneloa Ranch, Kinneloa Mesa, Kinneloa Canyon and Kinneloa Estates were subdivided in the late 1940's and most of the houses you see today were built in the 1950's or early 1960's.

PASADENA GLEN CHRONOLOGY

Some things we know....

1869 Job C. Davis claimed 193 acres of land directly north of the old Rancho Santa Anita, including Davis Canyon later to become the Pasadena Glen. He was granted a US patent for the property in 1875.

1881 Job C. Davis sold 193 acres to J.S. Vosburg and J.O. Vosburg. The Vosburgs waited until 1888 to record the deed.

1887 The Pasadena Land Boom. The Vosburgs actively participated in the frenzy of subdivision and creating residential lots that gripped neighboring Pasadena at this time. The 4-block area comprising the north side of Fairpoint Street, both sides of Barhite Street and the south side of Vosburg Street were surveyed into residential lots and at least seven houses were then built in what is called the Vosburg Tract.



1909 Dr. A.B. Shaw purchased a residential lot on the southeast side of Vosburg Street overlooking the Pasadena Glen and built an unusual house incorporating Korean architectural elements. He also purchased the land bordering the east side of the Pasadena Glen and planted orange groves.

1910-1920 The Pasadena Glen Community developed. Property owners built their own cabins but shared a large club house, dancing pavilion, outdoor swimming pool and tennis courts. A prospectus of the time admonished that the Glen "appeals only to the refined, nature loving class."

1918 John Burroughs, naturalist and author, lived in the Glen.

1937 A devastating flood swept away many of the Glen's community amenities, as well as several houses. Mildred Lockhart of neighboring Kinneloa Ranch offered temporary shelter to those who lost their homes.

1940-present Glen residents continue to be challenged by periodic floods, fires and earthquakes, but tenaciously remain and rebuild.

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LEE CARMICHAEL'S STORY: Excerpts from Oral History Interviews

Lee and Vi Carmichael designed and built their Kinneloa Canyon Rd. house in 1952, but while theirs was only the third house on the entire street, Lee was no stranger to these parts. Lee arrived in the neighborhood in 1940 after having his group booted off the Caltech campus where they had been headquartered. Being expelled from Caltech was the result of a fire and explosion that killed a man. What the man was doing was making a rocket—more specifically, he was using a lathe on a chair-leg size piece of rocket propellant material, which caused an explosion.

Since 1939, Caltech had been making rockets on the Caltech campus. A "rocket" in those days looked like a long, skinny salami with fins on the back that resembled bent playing cards. What was stuffed inside the steel salami skin was called "solid propellant." Trying to mold globs of solid propellant that looked like big poker chips into long, skinny, sausage shapes was, ah, exciting.

At any time this stuff could go bang, and when it did it, several poker chips that you can hold in your hand could knock your house down. Lee's job was to design and

build the big, heavy machinery that squashed these poker chips into a long sausage shape. If that worked, somebody else tried to further shape the extrusion into the precise shape required to fit it into the steel skin.

And what did they do with them when they were finished? Caltech sold them to the US Government who either gave or sold them to England so the Brits could shoot them at the Germans. Later, our Government kept most of them and we used them to shoot at the Germans, Italians and, mostly, the Japanese, and not infrequently, at ourselves, when the point and shoot guidance system backfired.

So, the Caltech rocket project moved to the hills and away from everybody where if something dramatic happened, the San Marino neighbors' roofs were safe. Over the years, one of the several unplanned rocket ignitions cost Lee three fingers off his hand.

The hills, of course, were the Kinneloa Ranch. And this project was a BIG DEAL. Over a hundred buildings, four of which still remain, housed the production, storage and administration of a sophisticated high-volume top secret manufacturing effort. Top secret meant, among other things, not telling anybody, including your spouse, where you worked or what you did. The answer to the wife's question of "What's your work number, honey, in case the kids get sick?" was "None of your business."



One of the four remaining buildings from the Caltech rocket project.

There might have been as many as a thousand people who passed through the gates each day, and several dozen of them worked for Lee. Lee's group often ran 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to design and build (and after an "event," to fix) the evermore sophisticated presses used to extrude globs of propellant into 3-foot long sausage shapes.

Lee retired from Caltech after 32 years of some of the most exciting work a person can have, and then took the position of Chief Engineer with Strolee of California for another 15 years. Now he's only working on a part-time basis in the office of the Pasadena Presbyterian Church which gives him and Vi time to go on trips. Other times Lee tries to go around Eaton Canyon Golf Course in the 40s. Lee's best? 43.

Can you help? Our next issue of the Newsletter will be devoted to the history of the Pasadena Glen, but we need more information. If you are a Glen "historian" and would be willing to be interviewed, call Greg McReynolds at 794-0638 or Marianna Bowman at 794-4590.

VILLALOA NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY SOCIETY

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